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MYSTERIOUS INDIA

ROBERT CHAUVELOT

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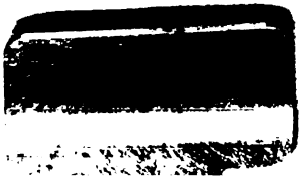

MYSTERIOUS INDIA

UNIV. OF
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A TIGER HUNT UNDER THE GREAT MOGULS

(From an Indo-Persian painting of the sixteenth century)

MYSTERIOUS INDIA

Its Rajahs - Its Brahmans - Its Fakirs

BY

ROBERT CHAUVELOT

ILLUSTRATED WITH
SIXTY PHOTOGRAPHS

TRANSLATED BY

ELEANOR STIMSON BROOKS

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1921

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Copyright, 1921, by
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TO

THE PRINCESS AMÉDÉE DE BROGLIE

WHO

HAS SEVERAL TIMES TRODDEN

THE SACRED SOIL OF THE BRAHMANS

I OFFER, VERY RESPECTFULLY,

THIS "MYSTERIOUS INDIA"

IN GRATITUDE

FOR THE KINDLY FRIENDSHIP

WITH WHICH SHE HONORS ME

774223

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PREFACE

FLAUBERT could not be consoled for having to die without seeing Benares. The genial author of *Salammbô,* the immortal thinker of *The Temptation of Saint Anthony,* never in the flesh witnessed those long lines of pilgrims, performing their morning ablutions on the banks of the Ganges, in the glory of the radiant East.

It must be confessed that in the days when Madame Bovary gave herself up to her romantic dreams, in the days when that learned and sonorous idiot, Homais, made the bottles in his apothecary's laboratory tremble under the rush of his passionate Voltairian aphorisms, in those days a journey to India constituted neither more nor less than a veritable expedition by land and sea. First of all, one had to hoist oneself painfully into the stage from Rouen to Paris, then from the stage for Paris into the stage for Lyons, passing through Lieusaint, of sinister and melodramatic memory. By one transfer after another, one arrived, on a fine morning, at Marseilles, bruised, exhausted, shattered by the successive shakings of the diligences and the

uncomfortable hospitality of the inns. After that one had to embark from Marseilles for Gibraltar and set sail for the Cape of Good Hope, for Bourbon Island, Port Louis and the Isle de France, and finally for Point de Galle, at that time the capital of Ceylon—in all, three long months of navigation in the Mediterranean, around Africa and across the Indian Ocean. Certainly enough to discourage Madame Bovary, if she was subject to seasickness!

Today the "Côte d'Azur" express deposits you in one night on the quays of La Joliette whence, the next morning, a long steamer carries you off, to the strains of music, toward Egypt, once penetrated by "the Great Frenchman." In five days you reach Port Said; five more take you from Suez to Djibouti or to Aden; and a final five suffice for you to gain the harbor of Bombay. From this point India today lies open to the super-tourist as does Java, Indo-China or New Zealand. The double screws and the engines of our steamships have made short work of distance and of oceans. It has become as easy to go to India as to visit the Tyrol or Andalusia. For this you may take the word of the author, who has twice found it so by personal experience.

Among all the exotic countries which exercise a magnetic attraction upon our imagination, India

is perhaps the one which most powerfully stirs the curiosity of the reader, the artist, the fireside traveler. It is all very well to talk of Egypt, China, Palestine, Japan. But India, what a magic word! And how many times I have heard charming women murmur to me in a faraway, almost ecstatic voice, with that little shiver which is the forerunner of mysterious things: "Ah! how I envy you. . . . To go to India, that would be my dream!"

And thereupon, in the blue or black, gray or green eyes of my interlocutor, as in the eyes of the Claire Lenoir of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, I would see rows of imaginary pagodas rise and take shape, under the silent caress of the great twisted palm-trees. I would seem to see in these feminine, in these creative eyes the tinkling defile of the elephants, decked with their scarlet trappings and their silver howdahs, the procession of white-bearded priests, the torch-bearers, the musicians, the dancing girls, their lids blackened with kohl, preceding the horde of fakirs with their gestures as of men possessed or mad. Yes, in the half-closed eyes of this woman of Paris I would distinguish it all clearly, this apparition of India the marvelous, the inviolate, unrolling in the moonlight the linked chain of its turbulent, sacred procession, under the

hard, cruel stare of its grimacing idols with their many hands and feet, their terrifying smiles of love, grief or death!

The truth is, there smolders, unavowed, in all of us, the latent fire of mystery. The enigmatic, everything that lies outside our everyday experience, has for us an invincible attraction, a marked flavor—shall I say an irritating flavor?—like that of those peppery, burning curries which India also reveals to us. Our childhood, our early youth is nourished on tales—alas! so often fantastic—of Jacolliot, Jules Verne and their kind. Our imagination as young people, then as grown people, is delighted and charmed by the accurate, poetical and true descriptions of Louis Rousselet, Chevrillon, Pierre Loti, Jules Bois and Brieux. The word "rajah" brings to our ears the tinkling of gold and gems, a remnant of the vanished omnipotence of the Grand Moguls, the faraway echo of the trumpets of Golconda the Magnificent, town of dreams and city of diamonds. Does someone mention fakirs in our presence? Immediately we call up, with the help of our imagination, a panorama of pictured thoughts. On the threshold of an old, ruined temple, invaded by the jungle, stands a man with burning eyes, turbaned, half naked, frightfully emaciated. His gaze seems lost in the Be-

yond. He is externalizing himself, murmuring confused, indistinct, broken words. . . . And suddenly the miraculous power of his obstinate will makes the grain sprout, bursting the double sheath of its seed-leaf with the running sap and the sunward urge of its leaves, which grow and turn green in an instant. Let us confess it; the contrast of this power and this poverty in the fakir delights our spirit with its appetite for paradox. In the same way we are charmed by the juxtaposition, the contact, in spite of the abyss of the castes, of the dazzling prince and the abject pariah. Extremes meet in India, the still recent memory of the Durbar, for example, as oppressive as it was grandiose, and the frightful vision of famines past and to come.

But we must be on our guard against these frights of fireside fancy, we must beware of this general tendency, so natural to our Latin temperament, to enlarge and exaggerate everything, to see everything poetically through the prism of our exuberant optimism! . . . By manufacturing for ourselves too far in advance an artificial and fictitious India, we risk losing our dearest illusions, one by one, before the reality of facts. Without doubt, India is beautiful, grand, moving. Yet I dare to affirm that far more than anything else it is

interesting. "Interesting" is, indeed, the word, that seems to me most suited to this immense reservoir of thinking humanity. The adjective "beautiful" suits her only partially, in certain regions scattered over the map, and of which the North, the Himalaya especially, is the chief crown. In other parts there is nothing but melancholy plains, arid deserts, brackish and dried-up pools. The jungle itself, so rich and luxuriant in the northern parts of the Empire, is often nothing but tall and sunbaked underbrush, of which the tropical vegetation consists principally of aloes and cacti.

One of the most fascinating of our fashionable women, who had just returned from India, spoke to me only the other day of her disenchantment and her annoyances.

"Ah, Monsieur," she exclaimed, "what a disillusion I have just experienced! I who was expecting to go from fairyland to fairyland! Not a single tiger did I see in the jungle, and very few elephants in the towns; nowadays the rajahs go about in aeroplanes and automobiles! As for the bayaderes, I could make nothing out of their dances; they bored me to death. And then what a lack of comfort everywhere, what detestable food! In the South, no hotels; one is obliged to sleep in the railway stations. If one only could sleep! But it

is impossible: the heat, the noise, the mosquitoes! . . . Ah! How my husband and I regretted the Nile boats and the great Egyptian palaces!"

Do not smile; this arraignment, however superficial it may appear to you, is not absolutely without foundation. A journey in India, even in our day of luxury and progress, is still a laborious matter, fatiguing and sometimes even disagreeable. But how enthralling for those who are willing to look for other things than tigers, elephants, dancing girls and the gipsy orchestras at afternoon tea.

India!

It is an open book, in which each—just as with the "Imitation"—may chance upon what fits his own case. To the philosopher it opens an unlimited field of new horizons, thoughts, concepts, from which he can glean a thousand lessons in ethics or in pure metaphysics. To the ethnographer, to the writer, India appears as a cradle of humanity from which almost all the European and Asiatic races have sprung, from which we ourselves come, and whose history, religion and customs stretch back age beyond age. The scientist, the physician will gather evidence there about the supreme ills of our poor flesh; the theosophist and the spiritualist will study there from the life the most extraordinary phenomena of hypnotism and

mediumistic possession; the artist will be enraptured by the strength or the delicacy of the high and low reliefs, the architectural designs, the exquisiteness of the traceries, the detail of the old miniatures. . . . And all, after having admired this India of the North, which has sprung from the Koran, Moslem with the exception of Jeypore, Gwalior and Benares,—all will wish to delve more deeply still into Brahmanism, by visiting that prodigious, that often terrifying Tamil India of the South: the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel.

May this work—brought together from notes taken in the course of two recent trips and having the further advantage that it is suitable to be placed in any hands—help to lift a corner of the curtain that still hides from our profane eyes the secret of the rajahs, the Brahmans and the fakirs!

But is not this to lay one's hand on the veil of Tanit?

R. C.

PART I.

MYSTERIOUS INDIA

CHAPTER I

THE PARSEES AND THE TOWERS OF SILENCE

The disciples of Zarathustra—The Armenians of India—A chapter on hats—In the Parsee quarter—Two funeral processions—A trip to the Towers of Silence—The vultures' quarry.

THE chief curiosity of Bombay, that which first catches one's eye as one steps off the steamer, is the sight of these grave worthies, with their skins of the color of brown bread, wearing spectacles, wearing strange head-dresses, half-European, half-Asiatic, who seem a sort of necessary link between the East and the West.

These Parsees—numbering today, in Bombay alone, upwards of fifty thousand—constitute, it must be recognized a veritable *élite*. Marvelous-

ly gifted as regards practical affairs, born business men, they have taken charge for twelve hundred years, that is to say since their immigration from Persia, not only of all the great commercial enterprises, but also of all the enviable posts, of all the most sought after situations in the Administration. They are the Armenians of India. I may add that they profess for France, its generous ideas and its glories, the most touching filial respect. Most of them—especially the rich—learn French, speak it and teach it with real love. Not merely does the Parsee chancellor of our consulate, M. Jamsetjee Sorabjee Settna, although he has never set foot in France, speak with the correctness of word and phrase of a graduate of the Sorbonne, but the government of the Republic, touched by so much good will and such perseverance, has granted to this zealous servitor the favor of the commission of an officer of the Academy. And you should see with what pride that worthy man wears, over his white jacket, both the violet ribbon . . . and the silver palms!

The bigotry of the castes—to which I shall have occasion to return in the course of these essays on India—the bigotry of the castes does not exist among the disciples of Zarathustra, the sun-worshipers, except in a quite embryonic state.

Actually they are divided into two classes: the *Irâni,* the civilized Parsees, and the *Schenchaï,* the barbarous Parsees. The former may be recognized by their striking head-dresses, either the *topy,* a melon-shaped construction of gray felt with rolled borders, or the *pagri,* a bishop's miter of blue foulard with small white dots, stiffened with a sort of gum or varnish. Add to the strangeness of these head-dresses the habit of wearing gold eyeglasses or spectacles, which give them an odd suggestion of Japanese doctors. . . . As for the *Schenchaï,* they are generally poor devils in rags, whose heads are covered with a turban that has nothing original about it.

"A difference in headgear, that's all!" I was smilingly assured by a rich Parsee of the upper class, who was thoroughly grounded in all matters European and Asiatic and a profound philosopher in his leisure hours. "Our religious equality is in no way affected by it."

"Even in the interior of your temples?" I suggested; "even on the threshold of death?"

"Even in the interior of our temples! Even on the threshold of death!" he repeated with indescribable firmness.

And immediately after, as if to make himself clear, "I cannot let you enter any of the seven

sanctuaries of our religion in Bombay. That is forbidden me, on pain of the severest penalties, and besides, my conscience, as a professing Parsee, would not allow me to do so. I regret it, for then you would be able to judge of the unity of our brothers in prayer. But if you would like to see how we die, rich or poor, noble or workman, come to my house early tomorrow morning. I will arrange it so that you can be present at two funerals after our rite, which we shall accompany to the wickets of the Towers of Silence on Malabar Hill. There you can verify our equality in death! On one condition, however. . . ."

"Which is?"

"Give me your word of honor to suppress my name if ever the fancy seizes you to write about these things. . . ."

"You have it."

And I shall keep my promise.

This is what I repeat to myself as I make my way to the house of my obliging cicerone who lives in Pârsia, the quarter of Bombay where dwell his co-religionists, in great white or yellow houses, four or five stories high. Together we now mount a crowded street dominated by the *pagri,* the national miter of varnished foulard. What a lot of

gold spectacles! Are far-sightedness and near-sightedness the fashion here?

But look, at the entrance of a prosperous house, and a little further on, near the door of a miserable, broken-down dwelling, there, on one side and another, is quite a large gathering of people, grave, bearded men, all clad in white, silent, seated on old wooden benches that encumber the road.

"These are the relations and friends of the two dead men," my guide whispers in my ear. "They alone will presently accompany the body. The parents and wives will remain in the home of the dead, drowned in tears, sobs and prayers. As for the white robes that seem to attract your attention, it is the customary mourning worn by our men. The women wear black, as you do in Europe."

Slowly the first procession sets out—a white litter, hermetically sealed, carried on the shoulders of eight white-gloved bearers, while those who are to walk fall in line behind it, their hands clasped on their foreheads, with the most edifying signs of compassion. Inwardly I am amazed at the singular mixture of idealism and superstition in the members of this sect, who have a horoscope cast at their birth, who abstain from smoking, for fear of profaning the fire, and who, in order to purify themselves, drink the urine of a bull mixed

with water that has been drawn by moonlight. Now we are climbing up the slope of Malabar Hill, the adorable little rise of palms that crowns the peninsula of Bombay, strewn with palaces and gay villas among clumps of acacias and cocoanut, banana and mimosa trees. Further on, emerging from the dense tropical foliage, there are five massive, gray towers, five smooth, round turrets, each one pierced by a single opening, a black, grilled gate, beneath which, by stooping, two men can enter from the front.

The Towers of Silence, the horrible and magnificent cemetery of the Parsees! . . . Why must this sunny, dreamy corner, this flowery paradise, this perfumed air, this riot of colors conceal the fearful spectacle of this quarry-to-be and the place of decay?

The bearers of the white litter have entered a shady lane which leads to one of the five towers. Above their heads wheel birds of prey, great and small, eagles, kites and buzzards, which in a few minutes will seize with their gray beaks the leavings of the vultures' feast.

The vultures! I can distinguish them now on their funereal perch. At the sound of steps they stretch out their skinny necks; bending greedily towards the approaching prey, they gobble joy-

ously on the top of the tower and swing their eager, gluttonous heads heavily from left to right.

But a hand is placed on my shoulder.

"We must stop here. You can go no further. Look; from this little knoll you can see the black wicket open and the vultures fling themselves into the interior to accomplish the work of destruction prescribed by the Zend-Avesta."

* * * * * *

Ah, what a sinister vision! That clicking lock, that half-open wicket, those bearers bending down and slipping in, carrying a long, white object. . . . A few minutes. . . . Then a second click. The funereal men have accomplished their task, they are returning among the living. And now there is a furious commotion which I cannot see but which I hear: a battle of hooked beaks, a concert of harsh, discordant cries.

"Come," says the guide, "in twenty minutes it will all be over. Besides, what is the use of remaining? You could not understand. Our religion, you see, forbids us to destroy our dead by Water, Earth or Fire—that is, to soil the three elements by the impure contact of our corpses. So we leave it to the vultures, to the sun, to the

waters of heaven to destroy our 'vestments of flesh and bone' and return them to the earth."

"So you, who are speaking to me at this moment, in such choice language, with so clear an intelligence, you, an Irâni of the upper class, almost or better than a European, you will be torn, slashed shred from shred by these hideous creatures?"

"I as well as the others. . . . As well as this second one whose procession is approaching. . . . As well as those that will come here tomorrow and the day after. Thus teaches Zarathustra. And besides, do you not think that, as between the worms of the tomb and the vultures of the open air, it is all one in the end?"

And beneath the sapphire sky of India, under these vivid, luxuriant palms, surrounded by these rare flowers and these penetrating perfumes, it seems to me that this gold-bespectacled Parsee has just paraphrased, without knowing it, the great thought of Schopenhauer, summing up the vicious circle of the human race:

"Death is the Reservoir of Life; Life is the Reservoir of Death."

CHAPTER II

IN THE BOWELS OF ELLORA

Across desert India—The discomfort of Indian inns—"Give the chick back to its mother!"—An improvised guide—In the heart of the mysterious caverns—Monolith buildings with neither joint nor cement—The caves of the bats.

ELLORA, the place of the Hindu catacombs! A sense of grandeur and terror grips you from the moment you enter these somber caverns, from the mouths of which escape whiffs of dank air, the sepulchers of gods and goddesses, infinitely colder and more austere than, for example, the cheerful Egyptian vaults of Sakkarah.

It is no easy matter to reach them, and far from comfortable to make even a short stay in their neighborhood. You must first cross immense, desert plains, dried-up, scorched, cracked, almost in the center of India, where the vegetation consists principally of aloes, cacti, paw-paws, mangoes, tamarinds, acacias and banana trees—a stony,

yellowed landscape that savors of autumn. Farewell, great palms of Bombay! Here and there are crumbling ruins, the names of towns that sound like the click of a sword: Aurengabad, Daulatabad, famous cities over which the Grand Moguls once extended their sway. Today, they are nothing but heaps of ruins crowned with underbrush. A few poor wretches inhabit these solitudes, sharing them with the beasts of the jungle.

I have spoken of all the discomfort of such an expedition and I return to it with the charitable hope of helping others to avoid the little annoyances that befell me. From Daulatabad, the railway station at which one alights, to Ellora there is no other means of transportation than a miserable wagon, drawn by wretched horses over an execrable road. Come! It is written! I shall make half the trip on foot. This gives me the appetite of an ogre when, having passed Rozas, the Mohammedan settlement, I at last, with what delight, catch sight of the little wayside inn, pompously decorated with the name "Traveler's Bungalow." Horrors! I am to sleep in a room that is not a room; no tooth-mug, only a chipped cup; the only linen a single rumpled towel that has undoubtedly already served other unfortunates like myself. Really, my desire to visit these grottoes

must be desperate indeed for me to sit down in that limping rocking-chair which is enough to make me seasick, a feeling I have never known before. And this dinner! No bread, nothing but rice, a box of old, rancid sardines imported from Portugal put up in cocoanut oil from Goa; tea that smells like the straw of a stable . . . and other infamies of the same stamp. The coolie, a sort of Handy Andy, is lost in excuses, bobbing his head after the Indian fashion. My grimaces have made an impression on him; he will go and prepare something.

It is seven o'clock in the evening. I am dropping of fatigue and hunger. In twenty minutes, at the latest, I must swallow my rice and sardines while I try to think of something else—*The Discourse on Method,* for example, or Plato's *Banquet* (what irony, that banquet!), in short, of some very serious, grave or philosophical subject, in order to forget my plight. I have often used this method: believe me, it is the best device for introducing stoically into one's stomach the nondescript food of certain exotic countries. Handy Andy returns, triumphantly bearing in his hands a live chick which would have grown into a fowl if Fate had not predestined him to serve as my principal dish. I utter a cry of anguish, both for the little beast which looks at me with its round, imploring

eyes, and for my stomach, which refuses to accept a bird that may still be agitated by its last agonies. I know their method of preparing chickens: they boil them alive, then pluck them and clean them and bring them to you with no other seasoning than a handful of salt.

"*Djao! Djao!* Take it away!"

And he goes off, his head hanging, his rejected offering in his hand.

In India I have killed many mosquitoes perhaps, and even, to be frank, plenty of other parasites—more indiscreet. At least I have restored a chick to its mother.

My real feast is the grottoes.

Innumerable, diverse, shadowy as the dark Erebus of Minos, Æacus and Rhadamanthus. All the cults of the peninsula, except that of Islam, are represented here: Brahmans, Buddhists and Jains may pray here in peace, hidden in the depths of the earth. Grimacing, sneering and gesticulating, according to their design, here are Sivâ, Vishnu, Kâli, Sombramanyé, Ganésa, Durga, Hanuman and Karrtikáye; here, also, the enigmatic and ironical smile of those ecstatic Gautamas, those twenty or more Jain prophets who seem to be holding council. But heavens! how primitive are all

the arrangements for visiting—excuse me! exploring—these grottoes! I can easily see why the stranger, attracted by the profusion of other things to be seen in India, deliberately disdains this pilgrimage of art and mystery. No accredited guides or obsequious conductors to serve as your Ariadne in this labyrinth. What in the world am I to do with my boy, whose understanding does not equal that of the lowest Brahman? . . . Fortunately, here comes a native who is going to rescue us from our predicament. He salutes me gravely and ceremoniously, squats down and draws out of his loincloth two living partridges with their legs tied together. What does all this mean? My good native servant, Subbaraya, rubs his hands, laughing silently. Cock-fighting is one of his favorite amusements. Yes, but this is not what interests me: it's a misdeal! A brief conversation takes place between the two good fellows. A miracle! The juggler whisks away his two partridges and transforms himself instantly into the guide and interpreter of Ellora. He knows these ruins by heart, being a native of Rozas, the neighboring hamlet. Let us be off then!

A few hundred meters and we are at the foot of a circular plateau which rises above the limitless plain like a cliff. In the interior of this natural

circle the hand of man has, in the course of centuries, dug out a series of excavations to shelter the gods. There are thirty-four of them, certain of which are inter-communicating. I shall content myself with visiting the principal ones, about fifteen in all. Without a guide one might be lost or even killed. Into these caverns we grope our way by the light of a dim lantern. First of all we come to that pure marvel called Kailas, a temple entirely carved out of the wall of massive granite. It is an excavation by itself, on the plateau; not a single joint, not a bit of masonry in the sculptured portals or the towers. Here dwells Kali, the Immodest. Next come Tin-Tal and Do-Tali, two Buddhist caverns with less ornamentation. In each of them is enthroned an enormous Buddha, with mustaches and piously vermilioned by the few faithful who, at the same time, also daubed over the nine genii of Fortune. As I come out of these twin chapels, piercing cries rise from the plain that stretches at my feet. It is some peasants, perched on their platforms, watching the harvest; the poor devils are splitting their throats shouting, while they wave sticks and pitchforks to protect their meager crops from the voracity of the rats, the birds and the buffaloes. A land of famine,

BOMBAY—THE COTTON MARKET FROM WHERE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF BALES OF THIS VALUABLE VEGETABLE FIBER ARE SHIPPED TO EUROPE

A PARADE OF SIKH INFANTRY

SIKH CAVALRY

AN INFORMAL RECEPTION AT THE COURT OF JEYPORE; THE GRANDSON OF THE MAHARAJAH AND THE AUTHOR IN THE CENTER

alas! in which beasts and men dispute bitterly for the means of existence.

Further on is the grotto of Vichwakarma, another Buddhist sanctuary endowed with a semi-circular vault and pillars at the side like a church. In the choir, if I may so call it, a pointed niche contains a great Sakyą-Muni, dreamy and benevolent (but why this rage always to decorate his lips with mustaches!). Everywhere is the odor of the tomb; at moments I stifle in this rarefied air, polluted by the excrement of the vampire bats. And I turn only an inattentive ear to the echo which I hear resounding under this nave of the catacombs, rebounding from wall to wall. Let us go on, by all means; I feel ill at ease. My two companions climb like goats over rubbish where I risk breaking my neck a hundred times. Still other excavations belong to the Buddhist group, in which the sobriety of decoration attests the desired austerity. Then chapels . . . endless chapels! And always under these vaults the horrid grinding of the vampire bats!

At last we are in the Brahman zone, the most important of all, which alone includes seventeen caves, all of the eleventh century: Das-Avatar, Rameshber, Nilakantha, marvelously sculptured temples, commemorating the loves of Sivâ and

Pârvati; Durmar-Lena, which resembles the grotto of Elephanta, near Bombay, and like it possesses admirable stone lions at the entrance, black *linghams,* white *yonis* and all the disconcerting, cynical, triumphant attributes of the Destroyer.

There are other Jain caverns, adorably sculptured, filigreed. It all amazes, delights, ravishes and terrifies one, but it does not touch one. What is lacking among all these marvels, these prodigies, these immense halls, these vertiginous stairways, these unexpected terraces, these openwork balconies, these headless bell-towers, is the presence and the piety of the people, which gives everything its life.

Underground cathedrals, fathomless, terrifying, which Divinity, itself, is weary of inhabiting.

CHAPTER III

AMBER THE DEAD AND ROSE-COLORED JEYPORE

In Rájputána — Disaster — A "Sleeping-city-in-the-wood" — Rose-colored Jeypore—A royal tea—Stonecutters and fakirs—The miracle of the serpent—The State tigers.

SINCE yesterday I have been in Rájputána, now fertile and cultivated, now arid and parched, like the country, for example, bordering on the bleak desert of Thur. I am making my way toward Jeypore, where with some delightful friends I hope to be received by the Maharajah of the independent State of the same name. A slight mishap awaits me; the prince is seriously ill and to his great regret cannot receive us. Nevertheless, we shall be his guests, graciously entertained by his brother and his nephews. A herald clad in scarlet and silver braid so informs us in almost impeccable English. We shall be taken on elephant-back to Amber, the ancient capital, today a dead and mysterious city; they are to organize, in our

honor, a polo game (we must not forget that this game is of Indian origin); the princes will offer us refreshments at the palace of the king's uncle; in short, they will try to palliate the absence of His Highness, who shows himself sincerely grieved by the incident. All this is delivered to us with many smiles, salutations and bobbings of the head —in this country one of the greatest marks of politeness—in a soft, melodious, whispering voice.

Let us make the best of our misfortune; as a matter of fact, there is so much to see in this Jeypore and this Amber that perhaps we shall have no cause to regret the complete freedom of our movements.

In the distance rise the outskirts of the Rose-colored City—so-called because, by royal decree, all its buildings, arcades, colonnades, balconies and shutters must be rose-colored, barely relieved, here and there, by timid white arabesques. This morning, on the Amber road, we are no longer passing the long lines of buffaloes and dromedaries, their pack-saddles laden with merchandise, which have just been threading the streets of Jeypore. We are evidently in the outskirts. Along the dusty road, bordered by aloes, we now meet peasants leading poor carts fastened to zebus with horns painted vermilion, which are drawing rice,

fruits and vegetables to town. At a turn of the road, some elephants file past, ranged in a circle about their mahouts. Our royal vehicles, no doubt! In fact, one of the king's stewards hastens up to us, to explain to us the proper fashion of making the perilous ascent of the pachyderms. The monstrous beasts have knelt down docilely, at the prick of the steel on the point of their ears; a little portable ladder slips from their back to the ground and by means of this we reach the seat of the howdah. Almost directly in front of us a well-paved road, slightly winding, bordered by a parapet, cuts at right angles, about five hundred meters away, the first wall of Amber.

As our elephants enter the gates of the palace, our watches mark ten o'clock. The sun in all its splendor illuminates, transfigures the ruins which surround us and throws a glitter over the little lake of Tal-Koutora. Still preceded by the steward, we set out to walk through the halls of the ancient dwelling where the fancy of the Rajput kings brought together, as regards decoration, every sort of refinement the human mind could conceive. We are dazzled by the phantasmagory of mosaics, porcelain, glass and gold. Here is the Dewankhâna, or Hall of Mirrors, where the monarch used to give audiences. Under the

double row of columns which support a massive entablature and along the walls covered with stucco, runs a profusion of interlaced lines, designs, birds and flowers, the details of which recall, in their infinite complication, the style of the palaces of Jahangir and Ranjit-Singh, at Lahore, —an architecture distinctly Mohammedan in its origin, in which the kings of Amber were nevertheless careful to show their profound faith in Brahmanism. This impression rises from the frescoes, for the most part rather coarse, which represent allegorically this or that religious myth. Now it is the good Ganésa, the elephant-god, with his many arms, his trunk falling down in a spiral over his abdomen; now Karttikéya, the peacock-god, who presides over war; or Hanuman, the monkey-god, the friend of man, a hero celebrated in more than one epic page of the *Râmâyana*. Next we penetrate into the ancient harem, today accessible to profane Europeans. The facets of the vaultings, made of ancient mirrors, now dim and tarnished, still reflect imperfectly the alcoves, the raised seats, the fishpond, where, after the bath and the massage, the ranees used to rest. All these apartments, carefully shut in with screens of white marble open-work, overhang like a terrace the narrow gorge in which lay the Capital. How many

dramas of love and jealousy have these walls of lace-work sheltered? How many stifled sobs, overwhelming despairs, cries of pain perhaps?

Today Amber still guards the anguish of these mysteries. The dead city, swallowed up in verdure, smothered under stifling vines, seems like a city of destruction glimpsed in an opium dream. Ruined temples, crumbling porticoes, tumble-down stairways, over-grown gardens, dried up ponds. Far off the interminable wall, running the length of the valley, barring the pass with its lofty pinnacles. Beyond, mountains, and again mountains. . . .

And the desert, the yellow, arid desert, which seems as if it could never end.

Why have the present sovereigns quitted this poetic and majestic residence to build an infinity of palaces on the flat bottom of the plain, without any extensive view, in the midst of a great, almost modern city (it dates from our Renaissance) with rectilinear streets which give it a sort of vague suggestion of New York or Alaska?

This is the question which I quite naturally ask the princes who offer us refreshments next day, after a closely disputed polo match. They tell me this decision resulted from a caprice of Jay Singh.

This rajah astronomer, who lived in the sixteenth century, had studied in European books the norms of cosmography, the theorems of the heavenly triangulation, and the chief hypotheses concerning the moving stars. A thinker as well as a statesman, he had known how to maintain an era of prosperity in his kingdom, while at the same time refreshing his mind with analytical mathematics and the most delicate and arduous cosmological researches. From this to having an observatory built in his capital was only a step. He himself oversaw it, to make sure that the foundations were exactly square and level; then he had gigantic sextants, theodolites and compasses set up in the plain, for which he himself drew up the designs, watching over the building of the finely cut foundations, rectifying the drawings, and laying the first stone of a pavilion designed to shelter his calculations and his classified diagrams. The rest, palace, gardens, rose-colored city followed this costly and characteristically Hindu caprice. The story is told me by a nephew of the maharajah, a slender young man with a fine, black mustache and large jet-black eyes, the winner in the polo match which I have just watched. I promise him that I will not fail to visit the observatory of his illustrious ancestor, although in mathematics I remain myself at

the square of the hypotenuse of my bachelor's degree.

They offer us an Indian collation: rice cakes, cakes of pounded almonds, sinister looking preserves, disturbing sweets which we touch only with the tips of our teeth. Suppose it were mandrake jelly, or preserved tiger's mustaches! Brr! Such things have been! Not for the benefit of inoffensive French travelers, but for that of the detested English functionaries. Our hosts, it is true, have good faces—were it not for those ferociously turned-up Rajput beards of theirs.

A charming attention is now reserved for us. By royal command, all the jewelers and goldsmiths of the city have been requisitioned. There they are before us, spreading out their baskets, letting the pearls of Ceylon trickle through our fingers, the rubies of Burmah, the diamonds of Punnah, translucent enamels over gold foundations, bracelets, rings, necklaces. They are not trying to force our hands, as I thought at first; it is only a gracious thought on the part of our hosts, and a platonic compliance on the part of the jewelers. Our Parisian women are enraptured, but do not allow themselves to be tempted. As I have since been able to convince myself, many of these trinkets have been made in response to princely and other

orders; the prices asked are usually higher, by at least a third, than those of our rue de la Paix. Discreetly, with many smiles, bows and prostrations, the merchants collect their jewel caskets and make off with padded, feline steps, to give place to fakirs, jugglers and conjurors.

Before our eyes, somewhat *blasé,* but deferential none the less, mangoes sprout and grow, eggs and fishes appear and vanish, mongooses and cobras fight and kill each other, till the moment when, irritated by our involuntary apathy, the fakir juggles himself away. An inexplicable and truly curious trick. That worthy curls himself up in a low basket, shaped like a flattened jar. Over him a companion shuts down the lid, also of wickerwork, invokes his "monkey's skull" (the ring of all the Robert Houdins of India) and pierces the basket in all directions with his sword. Better yet, he lifts up the cover, jumps with both feet into the basket, stamps all over it, picks it up in his arms, turns it upside down and shows it to us. Nothing! It is empty! More passes by the assistant, and the basket is filled again. In spite of my skepticism, I am forced to bow before the reality of facts. It is impossible, moreover, to explain this experience except, perhaps, by the aid of some suggestion they have forced upon us. If that is the

case, we have been "fakirized," if I may call it so. What a humiliation for a wide-awake, well-regulated citizen!

Another trick, even more stupefying. From a goatskin bottle the juggler—this one is certainly clever—draws a living adder and turns it over to a mongoose, who makes but one mouthful of it. The reptile, bitten and torn everywhere, pierced all over by the sharp teeth of his adversary, is no longer anything but a bloody rag. This remnant, chewed and almost in shreds, twists lamentably about on the ground. The fakir thereupon seizes it between his first finger and thumb and extends it on its back. Then he murmurs some strange words and with his thumbnail gently strokes several times the white scales of the belly. This caress, repeated several times, is, properly speaking, nothing but the lightest touch, it is not even a massage. . . . And behold, little by little, the creature comes to life again, contracts and distends itself, twists about and finally, with a violent blow of its tail, restores itself to its original and normal axis. It is the return of life, complete and whole: crawling, dartings of a fierce tongue, everything has come back as if by enchantment; the flat and flabby body has swelled up again as if some new sap had suddenly revivified it. It is impossible to

suspect a substitution: it is certainly the same adder; I recognize it by its still bleeding wounds. Let who will explain it. . . . *I have seen this!*

How enigmatical these people are! On certain sides quite childish, at times profound thinkers and philosophers, and whether submissive or in revolt, always grave, they positively disconcert me. Is this amazing juggler actually of the same race as these lazy strollers whom I meet now, hand in hand, in the Mohollo Kamnigar or goldsmith's quarter? How prosaic are these grain merchants, crouching on their doorsills, these youths who, as they walk, are drying in the sun long pieces of damp cloth, these children playing about among the pigeons pecking in the square of Manak-Chowk. Nevertheless, from such as these, from these Aryans, have come the Yogis, the contemplatives, the thaumaturgists who confound our most subtle metaphysicians. . . .

On the sidewalks, cluttered with pigeons, women pass, their nostrils pierced with a silver ring, their arms and ankles loaded with tinkling bracelets; their veils and saris giving, amid the huckstering of the merchants and the idle chatter, a note of grace and rhythm. From afar come dull, hoarse growls from the nine cages of the public menagerie of Cherouka-Pindjéra, where, at his

own expense, His Highness supports the State tigers.

Curious, indeed, this people, who neglect to relieve the misery and sickness of human beings in order to provide food for their natural enemies, the wild beasts!

CHAPTER IV

HINDU WIVES AND WIDOWS

The sad fate of the women—The humanity of the English—The work of Lady Dufferin, ex-Vicereine of India—The law of Manu and its cruel articles—Plebeians and patricians—Dramas of the women's quarters.

A GENERAL study of India, that fairylike, marvelous land of tumultuous, fanatical, suffering humanity, is a sufficiently bold task. There are so many contrasts in it to the ordinary conceptions of our European minds!

Are we interested in the situation of the Hindu women? Then we fall into the midst of a paradox. No betrothed girl, no wife, no widow in the universe leads a life so painful, so rigorous, so closely shut in. I have traveled all over Europe and the Northern countries, I have seen the distress of the women among the nomad peoples of the extreme North, I have also had an opportunity to observe the physical imprisonment and moral

disenchantment of the Orientals in the land of the Crescent, their effacement in the Celestial Empire, their puerility in the Land of the Rising Sun; later, in Oceanica or during long months of exploration, I have sailed around islands and archipelagoes and seen to what a state of inferiority the Papua women of New Guinea and the Maori women of New Zealand had fallen, those Maoris who yet rival our own Tahitian women in charm. Well! I must confess that not in the polar regions, not in the harems of Algeria, Tunis, Turkey, Egypt or Arabia, not in the Far East, not in Australia, nor in Polynesia, not even among the Redskins of America have I witnessed a downfall of the feminine sex so irremediable, so heart-rending as in the women's quarters among the Brahmans.

It must not be imagined that I am exaggerating. I should not like to seem to be deliberately making these brief observations of mine dramatic. The condition of the Hindu woman is certainly unfortunate and deplorable in every way; but we must recognize that it tends to improve from day to day and to become more supportable, since the liberal Administration of the United Kingdom has let fall upon the land the manna of its indisputable benefits.

In this connection—since we are speaking of an

allied and friendly nation—let us first render full and prompt justice to the tales, the lies and the slanders which have become the monopoly of a certain section of the press and literature, a section mediocre enough in any case. When I first set out for India, in 1908, I left, I must confess, with an unbelievable prejudice against our neighbors across the channel. To be frank, I was prepared to find everything wrong and to criticize and denounce, in the great Parisian newspapers, reviews and magazines [1] of which I was the correspondent, the abuses and malpractices of the occupying race. In my innermost heart there was a secret wound to my patriotism, the bitterness of a Frenchman against the ravishers of our Indian empire of Dupleix, a feeling not unlike what I had experienced a short time before on pressing the Canadian soil of our heroic Montcalm.

A first minute and honest inquiry, to the fruits of which have since been added other observations gathered during the course of my second visit, converted me to a diametrically opposed opinion; to tell the truth, I have returned thoroughly convinced of the pacific and humanitarian rôle of the English. These are not vain words, dictated by

[1] *Echo de Paris, Revue Hebdomadaire, Illustration, Monde Illustré, Femina,* etc.

A BAYADERE DANCE

SNAKE AND SCORPION CHARMERS

THRESHING OUT EARTH-NUTS

GRINDING EARTH-NUTS TO EXTRACT OIL.

gratitude or politeness towards the British hosts who received me so cordially. I am expressing purely and simply nothing but my own thoughts. Ever since the English have presided over the destinies of the Empire, there have been no more of those abominable human sacrifices in the pagodas, no more of those *suttees*, hideous sacrifices of widows, no more of those mad orgies of murder, torture and debauchery! Less sickness, fewer epidemics, fewer famines, fewer internal wars! It is the *pax Britannica* (which may be compared to our own beneficent influence in Morocco), the great peace which permits commerce to develop and humanity to live better and suffer less.

Shall I relate some anecdotes on this subject? . . . I remember the charming and chivalrous act of an English officer in garrison at Landi-Kotal, on the outposts of Afghanistan. Preceded by Lieutenant W.T.F.—of the 57th regiment, Wilde's Rifles, I had entered one of the little streets of the Afghan quarter. A Moslem woman, whose veil was raised to her forehead and allowed her gracious face to be seen, had just come out of an adjoining shop. The officer noticed it and cried out sharply, *"Yoki! Yoki!"* The woman, whose attention had been aroused by this cry, instantly lowered her veil and passed us by without our

being able to see her features, so that neither her modesty nor her orthodoxy was in the least disturbed. I could multiply such occurrences to infinity. It will suffice, for example, to recall the respect which the Anglo-Saxons insist shall be shown in the temples and pagodas, where the foreigner finds himself bound, under severe penalties, to maintain "the same decent and respectful attitude which he would maintain in the interior of his own churches" (*sic*). Moreover, in certain sanctuaries, large notices forbid smoking and loud talking. The same tact is responsible for the decrees which forbid hunting in several parts of the country, which are nevertheless full of game, such as Muttra, the sacred land of the beasts, where Krishna lived his poetic and amorous idyll, in the midst of the human beings of the villages and the beasts of the jungle.

In the matter of education and social uplift, I must also mention the admirable initiative of the English women and their American sisters who, after having studied medicine in Europe, have not hesitated to enroll themselves under the banner of Lady Dufferin, the wife of the former viceroy of India, in order to carry the aid of medicine and surgery to the most distant corners of the immense Empire. It is well known that the law and the

modesty of the Brahmans forbid the Hindu woman to receive the help of a male physician. England has shown here also, that if she was capable of enriching herself from the land of her Asiatic vassals, she also understood the duties laid on her by her rôle as a great civilized nation. Let us salute her daughters with the same respect that we give to our own French women of the Red Cross.

But to return to the condition of the native woman. Her fate has been determined, from the remotest antiquity, by the theocratic code of the Brahmans, a sort of religious, civil and moral catechism called the Law of Manu. Without transcribing the whole of Book V of this social monument (although the reading of it would not fail to be curious, piquant and at times excessively amusing) let us be content with plucking blossoms, here and there, from its flower-beds, in order the better to appreciate all its exotic perfume.

To begin with, this first handful:

"The name of a woman," says the Law of Manu, *"should be easy to pronounce, sweet, clear and agreeable; it should end in long vowels and resemble words of benediction."*

Is not this indeed deliciously poetic, excluding

as it does all unfamiliar and inharmonious appellations?

Let us pass on to the law of obedience:

"A little girl, a young woman, a woman of advanced years should never, even in her own home, obey her own wishes. A woman must never rule herself: in her childhood she obeys her father; in her youth her husband; when her husband dies, she obeys her sons."

(See and compare with this, article 213 of our Civil Code: "The husband owes protection to his wife, the wife obedience to her husband.")

The Law of Manu goes further than our Code. It regulates the conduct of the wife in her home; and its solicitude, I was about to say its meddling, extends to the most intimate details of the hearth, the business of the household and even of the kitchen:

"The woman must always be good-tempered and must skilfully conduct the affairs of her home. She must take great care of the household utensils and of the preparation of the food, and know how to watch over the well-being of her husband, while spending as little as possible."

Finally, here is a law which I, for my part, cannot help considering Draconian, in spite of my belonging to the strong and ugly sex:

"If the conduct of the husband is blameworthy, if he gives himself over to other loves and even if he is without good qualities, the wife must remain virtuous and constantly revere him as a god."

But, we ask, if the woman does not heed this, if the wife transgresses the sacred prescriptions of the Law of Manu, what will become of her?

I tremble to write it:

"The woman unfaithful to her husband is given over to ignominy during the whole of her earthly life. After death, she is born again in the belly of a jackal, or else she is afflicted with elephantiasis or tuberculosis."

Which is enough to render thoughtful and virtuous even some of the heroines of Bourget and Prévost!

But let us speak a little of marriage. They marry very young in India, almost before they are weaned. This is not a jest. Children are betrothed at the breast, and what our young candidates for the degree of matrimony call by the pretty medieval name of "courting" takes place here between the rattle and the hoop. These marriages of children who know each other not at all —or very little—are extremely frequent. The real, effective marriage naturally does not take place until between the ages of twelve and fifteen. But

in the meantime there is no possibility of breaking the engagement between the fictitious husband and wife. So true is this that—terrible as it is to say it—if one of the infant couple dies (that is to say, the husband) the other is compelled to remain single for the rest of life: it is henceforth forbidden to her to think of marriage. This pitiless decree naturally applies only to the woman, always so unjustly treated by the Brahmans.

The Law of Manu says expressly:

"After having lost her husband, the widow must shave her hair and voluntarily let her body grow thin, by nourishing herself only on flowers and pure fruit; she must never think of marrying again, nor even pronounce the name of another man."

More yet! The widows of the rite of Sivâ are allowed to have only one meal a day and never eat fish. Let us note in passing that the rite according to Vishnu allows some mitigations of this régime of torture. All these reasons and many others explain why, to his astonishment, the European traveler meets so few women in India. Some, principally those of the North, never leave their harems or zenanas, from which they watch the coming and going in the streets from the terraces of their houses, through the open-work

screens of pink pottery or white marble. Others go out veiled or in palanquins borne on the arms of fierce eunuchs with fiery eyes. It is only in the country of the Sikhs, in the Punjab, at Amritsar, for example, that one sees long lines of young and adorable women moving, with uncovered faces, about the Golden Temple or on the porphyry and onyx steps of the Lake of Immortality. But these are not followers of the formidable Brahmanistic faith, they are the poetic disciples of the Book-god, the pantheistic and relatively modern religion of the Grânths, founded by the guru Nânak who, in the sixteenth century of our era, was the reforming Luther of Brahmanism. In southern India, on the coast of Coromandel, and in the country of Malabar, I also had the pleasure and consolation of seeing, at Madras, at Tanjore, at Sri-Ragham, at Trichinopoly, at Madura, the women of the people belonging to the kindlier rite of Vishnu, moving freely about without veils, in the market and public squares, the body gracefully curved, the head held high and surmounted by a jar, the gestures as graceful as those of Tanagra figurines.

I have spoken of the women of the people who follow the rites of Sivâ and Vishnu, the two great gods of India—for Brahma, the principal creator,

is so high that only the priests are allowed to adore him; I shall speak later of the bayadere; it remains for me to say a few words of the sovereign, of her who, in the Hindustani tongue, is called *ranee* or *maharanee* (queen or great queen).

In the first place, the ranee must be of an old and illustrious caste. It is not rare, in India, to see a prince, the possessor of an income of thirty or forty millions, marry the daughter of a poor, ruined Brahman. If the caste is ancient and of celebrated origin, it is he who is flattered and ennobled by this marriage, which makes him almost the ally and relative of the gods. I am speaking here, of course, of the first wife, she who is regarded as legitimate by the people and the supporters of the crown, and who will be the mother of the Crown Prince. Let us not, therefore, call her the "favorite," as is done in Turkey or in Persia, an epithet applied, on the contrary, to all the wives and concubines which later throng the polygamous harem of the Indian monarch. Such, for example, is the case with the Nizam of Hyderabad, whose zenana numbers several hundred women.

The ranee does not reign. She must content herself with being the effaced wife of the rajah, and the mother and teacher of the princes. Never-

theless, this rule suffers a few rare exceptions in Central India, at Bhopal, for example, where for centuries the scepter has fallen on the distaff side to the hands of a Begum, a sort of queen of the Low Countries, who administers her State without the help of her prince consort. A curious offshoot of feminism in a soil usually so hostile to it!

The ranee, who is not at the same time an emancipated Begum, thus passes her days mournfully behind the closed blinds of the women's quarters, surrounded by her followers, her dancers and her musicians. She leaves as little as possible—far less often than her disenchanted Ottoman sisters—the golden cage which has been assigned to her as a dwelling. And if she is obliged to go out, it is always heavily veiled, in a closely screened landau, sheltered from the indiscreet glances of the crowd and above all from those of impure strangers. A few liberal rajahs, like the Maharajahs of Kapurthala, of Gwalior, of Cooch-Béhar, the Nawab of Burdwan, the Gaekwar of Baroda, have somewhat tempered this rigid régime; they allow their ranees to move freely about, with uncovered faces, within the enclosure of the palace and the royal gardens; at times they even go so far as to present them to their European guests, to have them sit at their table and to take them with them

to Europe, to London and Paris. But these innovations are not taken in good part by the people and the priests. A prince is also blamed by his subjects, with more show of reason, when he marries a foreigner, even after the first marriage of the legitimate ranee. Whatever she may do, the new foreign wife or concubine, even if she has become a convert to Brahmanism, can never wash away the original stain: that of having *once* eaten oxen and cows, sacred animals! An indelible blot that will, forever after, involve her in a moral quarantine, full of secret repugnance and invincible suspicion.

It is impossible to form any idea of the thousands and thousands of intrigues which are born and come to a head every day in the interior of the zenana. There dramatic alliances, perfidious betrayals, somber tragedies take place in an atmosphere of perfume and flowers. The wives who have been abandoned for some stranger from the North or the East form a close league against the newcomer, against the intruder, against the preferred one. Former enemies are reconciled and unite in the common vengeance which does not stop at the prospect of horrible reprisals. If the plot is discovered, the favorite of the day easily obtains from her master the death of the guilty person

or persons, by the cord, the dagger or the brew of hemp, three instruments of murder that never spare. But if the plot succeeds . . . then woe to the stranger! She must remain on her guard day and night, and never accept a drink, a gift, a sweetmeat, not even a flower from her rivals. Quick and subtle poison lies in wait for her every instant. Princesses have been known to be suddenly stung by a scorpion or a tarantula, bitten by a cobra or a coral snake or, more often, to struggle in the convulsions of a frightful agony, their intestines perforated here and there by the mustaches of a tiger, treacherously introduced into packets of drugs. I could give names and dates; but I owe discretion to the magnificent hosts who received me so warmly. Therefore, I shall not betray the word I gave to those who themselves made me such terrible confidences.

To sum up, in whatever sphere, the fate of the Hindu woman, plebeian or patrician, is worthy of exciting our deepest compassion. And if the dancing girl, as we shall see later on, escapes this unfortunate law, it is, alas! only at the expense of her morals.

PART II

CHAPTER V

THERE ARE RAJAHS AND RAJAHS

A rival of the "Nabob"—As in the days of the fairies—An Indian fire-eater—Innovating rajahs—The story of a disgrace—The Mohour—A judgment of God.

FOR as many as sixteen years, Paris has possessed no longer its Nabob—his sun set with my illustrious and regretted father-in-law, Alphonse Daudet—but its Rajah, or, more exactly, its Maharajah.

Which of us has not met in the fashionable world, in the saddling-room at Auteuil, at a first night in the Théâtre Français, on varnishing-day at our Salons (where the late Chartran depicted him in 1906), a certain bronze-complexioned prince, with a black pointed beard, smiling with all his dazzling white teeth, who, almost every year, from May to October, leaves his kingdom in India to come and bathe in our atmosphere of art and elegance, as in a life-giving bath of light and gaiety?

His Highness Jagatjit Singh, Maharajah of Kapurthala, one of the ruling princes of the Punjab, is virtually one of us at all the receptions, all the gymkhanas, all the Persian balls. One finds him now at Dampierre, with the Luynes, now at Chaumont, with the Broglies. And there the Maharajah forgets that he has the power of life and death over his subjects, in his Sikh kingdom of Kapurthala, as well as in his two provinces in Oudh: Bâondi and Bharáich. Who can boast of being more French in taste and tendencies than this Asiatic potentate, who speaks our language so purely, from whom the treasures of our art and literature hold no more secrets, who numbers his best friends in the French book of heraldry, who has had his sons brought up at the Collège des Clerès, in Normandy, near Rouen, and even carries his love of our ways so far as to have his cooks and his chauffeurs taught at Paris?

But one link was lacking from this chain. And back again in his capital the Maharajah dreamed once more, dreamed always and in spite of everything of Paris, of France. . . . He dreamed of it with melancholy, in one of his many Indian or Moorish palaces of Kapurthala, on the terrace of his enchanting villa, Buona-Vista, or again in that curious Renaissance château of Mussoorie which

he had built, like an eagle's nest, in the Himalaya, at an altitude of 2,300 meters. Suddenly, as happens in fairy tales, the magician extends his wand: "I wish," he says, "the mirage of Paris!"

A few lakhs of rupees tinkle. . . . And an immense, colossal palace, of a style exclusively French, surrounded everywhere by French gardens, lawns, vases, statues and gushing fountains, rose from the ancient and astonished soil of the Sikhs. It was at this time, being invited with the most gracious insistence to be present at "the hanging of the crane" in this French palace, that I first went to India.

Speaking of this prince, an amusing anecdote occurs to me which shows all the caustic wit of which, on occasion, he is capable.

Some years ago, during the early days of his life in Paris, the Maharajah went one evening to the Trône fair, accompanied by some friends who had a taste for outlandish and unusual enjoyments. In a booth, an imitation Indian was devouring impartially fire, glass and serpents.

"Who would like to talk Indian with the fire-eater?" shouted his Barnum, in a sonorous voice, through a megaphone.

"I," answered the Maharajah.

Smilingly, he approached the platform and in

his sweetest voice, revealing his dazzling Asiatic teeth, the prince asked several questions in Hindustani of the eater of fire, glass and serpents, who of course remained tongue-tied. It was in vain that His Highness next tried all the dialects in use in the peninsula: Sikh, Urdu, Sanscrit, Nepalese, Bengali, Tamil, Malabar. . . . The mountebank, bearded with wax and ocher, did not answer, and with good cause.

The manager, very much annoyed at this little scene, then intervened, saying to the royal questioner: "Look here, excuse me, but when will you stop splitting our heads with all this gibberish of yours? It's no use! Come, we can easily see you are no Indian."

The prince protested, very much amused.

"Well, if you are an Indian," went on the displayer of savages, "go ahead and eat a little glass and fire; they all eat them out there."

"That's right!" cried the people, interested in what was happening; "let him eat some fire!"

Then, still smiling, the Maharajah said simply, tapping the hollow of his stomach: "Impossible, I am *on a diet!*"

And he went off.

Rara avis, you will say. . . .

No indeed! Other potentates of India have fol-

lowed this example, among them the Maharajah of Gwalior, the Aga-Khan, the Gaekwar of Baroda, the Jam of Nawanagar, the cricket champion, the Nawab of Burdwan, *arbiter elegantiarum:* Europe—London or Paris—has conquered them. They no longer fear openly to display their modern tendencies. The Maharajah of Gwalior, for example, has actually renounced polygamy; it is said that at the death of his mother (the dowager queen), his only wife, the present Maharanee, with whom he is very much in love, will give up the veil and show her face uncovered, as the Maharanee of Cooch-Béhar and her daughters already do at Calcutta. As for the Gaekwar of Baroda, he has revolutionized his country and even the imperial English government by his subversive and extreme social projects. Imagine it! He has carried the paradox so far as to found schools for girls!

But by the side of these enlightened minds, with liberal ideas, how many reactionaries there are, how many backward men who are not yet free from the oppressive guardianship of the Brahmans, who are forbidden by their orthodox faith to come in contact with the impure *feringhis,* eaters of cows! . . . Of what use would it be to give their names? It is better to let them fall into

oblivion, those whose fanaticism separates them forever from our civilization and our Occidental way of thinking.

What strange court customs surround these jewel-laden princes! Powerful in their immense wealth and in their omnipotence in the heart of their own kingdoms—at least in everything that does not concern the army and the finances of the country—the Indian monarchs surround themselves with a veritable horde of ministers and courtiers. The official etiquette is excessively rigorous and the strict observance of these rules sometimes gives rise to the severest consequences. One incident will show this. At the court of a prince of my acquaintance, I was present, one day, at the annual feudal presentation of the *Mohour,* synonymous with the oath of fealty of our Middle Ages. The ceremony consists in summoning each vassal, who defiles, in hierarchical order, before the king clothed in his full military costume. Each one bows down as he pronounces an official phrase, then he touches the sovereign's hand with a silver rupee, which he afterwards drops into a silver plate. This lasts for three long hours and at the end of ten minutes becomes exasperatingly monotonous. One of the chamberlains, a sort of

under-Secretary of State, I imagine, who had been a favorite until this day, was passing before the throne. Unfortunately, as he went by, I do not know how it happened, but his foot caught in the fold of a rug; he stumbled and the piece of tribute fell before it had touched the king's hand. Then I saw the latter throw a hard, implacable look at the courtier, who reddened, stammered an excuse, and withdrew, quite out of countenance. It appeared that by not letting the symbolic rupee touch his sovereign, the vassal had proved as plain as day his flagrant bad faith toward his lord and master. Tradition demands, in the case of such a "Judgment of God," that he be immediately stripped of his functions and fall into disgrace.

Very autocratic in regard to their immediate circle of favorites and courtiers—I am speaking, naturally, of the reactionaries—these sovereigns have the power of life and death over their wives and children, and even over all the servants in the palace and the women's quarters. In certain Central States the English, who are always very respectful of the vested power of their protégés within their own domains, have recognized that princes of the reigning dynasties have the right of life and death over all their subjects. And the

good pleasure of the king can have the chamberlain or the minister whom he merely suspects crushed under the foot of the executioner-elephant.

Suspicion. . . .

The hidden disease that devours them!

CHAPTER VI

AN ASIATIC MÆCENAS

En route for the Punjab—"Kartarpour, Kartarpour!"—The arrival at the court of H. H. Jagatjit Singh, Maharajah of Kapurthala—A royal interview—Palace and gardens *à la française*—In imitation of the great Choiseul.

AM thinking of all these things in the express which carries me for the first time toward Kapurthala, to my friend the Maharajah, a very modern prince, who gives us in France the example of the completest assimilation of European ideas, but who, once he has returned, guards no less completely—and jealously—the customs, habits and traditions of his people and his country.

Ah! how rapidly they fly past the windows of the compartments, the stations that I must dash through in two days if I am to be present over there at the festival of the inauguration of the French palace, and at the Durbar, the anniversary of His Highness. Here is Baroda, the capital of

the Gaekwar of the same name. Here is Ahmedabad, the ancient city of the sultans of Guzerat, of which Sir Thomas Roe said in 1616 that it was "a city as large as London." . . . Here is Mount Abou, with its lacework temples, at the entrance of the wild desert of Rajputána. . . . Here is Ajmeere, here is Jeypore the Marvelous, here is Delhi, which for centuries was the capital of Asia. All these names, shouted in Hindustani by the railway guards, call up hours of splendor and conquest. What does it matter if today nothing is left but the dust and ashes of far-off history? These are among the things that endure and are never forgotten.

The interminable, arid and monotonous Rajput desert has disappeared. And with it those bands of monkeys that clung so amusingly to the telegraph poles, those slow caravans of dromedaries bearing southward the precious essences of the North. The soil now shows itself productive; it is the Punjab, the country of the Sikhs, yielding rich harvests of sugar-cane, cereals and cotton. We should like to open our eyes and keep them constantly open, to rivet them in some way on the fertile and sometimes flowering plains, but night has come, and with it the great daily care of in-

stalling the bedding on the uncomfortable and dusty bench.

"Kartarpour! Kartarpour!" That is the name which, the next morning, announces the end of the long and fatiguing journey. On the station platform—a real little country station—one of His Highness's stewards, all covered with silver braid, his sword at his side, installs us, my companions and me, in a vast limousine, which rolls off with irreproachable smoothness, while our baggage is confided to graceful little trotting mules.

A few miles . . . a tornado of dust behind us. . . . Then tufts of eucalyptus, aloes, cacti, orange-trees, to which cling the vines of the bougainvilliers. . . . Next a very wide, straight avenue; we pass through the ceremonial gates of the park, made of wrought iron with excellent taste in the style of Lorraine. . . . The auto makes a skilful curve before the perron of an immense palace, in the modern French style, adorned with bas-reliefs, groups and statues—a second edition of our Grand Palais des Champs-Elysées, surrounded by French gardens in an almost identical setting.

The guard, assembled under arms, reminds us of where we are. The lancers who throng the perron—giants over six feet tall, with beards and

upstanding mustaches—salute us with their lances. And toward us advances, with his hand outstretched, a smile on his lips, the Dewan, the prime minister, Colonel Massey, ex-Regent of the States of Kapurthala, the friend of the Maharajah, to whom, as well as to several Indian officers of the General Staff, he taught English and French.

"Yes," says the sovereign, who receives me in a great Louis XVI salon, furnished by Arbusson and decorated with mythological panels, "I wanted to realize here one of the dreams of my life, to leave behind me a work that would endure. You know how devoted I am to French art in all its forms. To me, French art stands for delicacy, elegance and above all for harmony. There is nothing disproportioned in it. Everything hangs together. Look at a portrait by Nattier, a bust by Houdon, or a façade by Mansart. That will explain to you why, in 1900, when I was anxious to build in my capital a palace in European style, I did not hesitate to give the preference to your art and your artists. The plans for my palace were, in fact, drawn up by two of your countrymen, MM. Alexandre Marcel and Paul Boyer."

"Just when did Your Highness give orders to begin the foundations?"

"In 1902. The work was carried forward with

all speed between 1903 and 1908, under the watchful direction of one of the best architects of Bombay, Mr. H. J. A. Bowden. As you have been able to judge for yourself, MM. Alexandre Marcel and Paul Boyer have placed on the exterior of the buildings a real stamp of grandeur and majesty. As for the interior arrangement of the rooms, everything pure and gracious offered by your art is synthesized in a skilful gradation of every epoch, from the dining-room and the Durbar, my reception-room, to the salons in the styles of Louis XIII, Louis XV, and Louis XVI, up to the Empire cabinet. But what can I say of the details! And the sculptures, the bas-reliefs, carried out so personally by Desbois and Tessier! All these things are the work of your artists. All the credit belongs to them. I have done nothing but open the door of the storehouse."

The Maharajah becomes animated. He speaks in a fresh, cordial voice, behind which no reservation of false modesty is concealed. But what this Mæcenas does not mention is the price it has cost him to "open the storehouse"—six millions; nor does he speak of the minute collector's solicitude with which he has himself presided over the buying and arrangement of the furniture, the rugs, the paintings, the china and the ornaments, which, one

and all, are placed in a setting suitable to their style.

A question rises to my lips: "And the French gardens which I noticed just now? Your Highness does not speak of them."

"Ah! yes! the French gardens! I have been especially anxious to have them. They are rather shocking over here, where we do nothing but step from the impenetrable jungle into the winding paths of an English garden. Frankly, how could I have done otherwise? And besides, for a lover of Versailles—and I am devoted to it—what could be more suggestive than these straight avenues, symmetrical, cut at right angles? Then, too, what could be more poetic than these thickets, full of shadow and mystery, where one might read a poem by Henri de Régnier, or an archaic pastiche of François de Nion? In the same classical spirit —and in order not to run counter to the geometrical idea of Le Nôtre—I have had them place before the principal façade the basin of a fountain, adorned with allegorical statues which recall the myths dear to the heart of the Roy-Soleil. In this way, I shall have, even in India, the illusion both of Versailles and Paris. A French park, and the 'cousin' of your Grand Palais des Champs-Elysées. What better could I ask?"

And as I make my way back to my flowery bungalow, where the jays are whistling, the nightingales singing and the emerald paroquets chattering, the memory comes to me of that other Mæcenas, a great French seigneur of the eighteenth century who, having fallen in love with Chinese art, also had his way.

His name was Etienne-François, Duke de Choiseul, the disgraced minister of Louis XV.

And in his love for the Celestial Empire he had built, near Amboise, the pagoda of Chanteloup.

CHAPTER VII

AN INDIAN DURBAR

What is meant by a Durbar—A princely anniversary horoscope—The "repurchase" of power—The review of the Sepoys—A typically Indian menu—The dance of the bayaderes—Why the bayadere is so much revered.

N Indian Durbar is much more than a fête, it is much more, even, than a gala celebration. To tell the truth, the Hindustani word remains untranslatable, as untranslatable as the esotericism of the Brahmans and the Buddhist bonzes often is.

The Durbar partakes at once of the nature of a military function, a religious function, and a social function. The people are admitted only to the two first and for them it is an occasion for great rejoicing: dances, dramatic spectacles and above all feasts, all "at the expense of the princess," when the ruler is a Begum, as at Bhopal, or "at the expense of the prince" when the dispenser of this bounty is a Mussulman Nabob, like the Nizam of

Hyderabad, or a Hindu Maharajah, like H. H. Jagatjit Singh, at Kapurthala. When these festivities overflow national boundaries, when they pass beyond the frontiers of the independent States, when they become imperial—that is to say English—the expenditure reaches an exorbitant figure and becomes the occasion for ruinous prodigalities. Witness the grand Durbar at Delhi, in 1903, which cost the Anglo-Indian government the sum of 200,000 pounds sterling and in connection with which the viceroy, Lord Curzon, who saw to many things himself, spent out of his own purse the pretty little sum of 15,000 pounds. As we can see, the India of today has not fallen behind yesterday; it still remains the land, uniquely perhaps, of splendor, lavish and dazzling splendor. Was not this shown, for that matter, in a magical way at the time of the coronation of H. M. George V?

People cry up the hospitality of the Scotch, which has become proverbial. I have never put it to the test; but I tasted several years ago, long before the war, the charm of the Hungarian hospitality of a great magnate of the Crown of Saint Stephen, my dear and regretted Count Eugene Zichy, a true friend of France, and a great noble as well, in the full meaning of the term, since he was the chamberlain of the late ex-Emperor Fran-

cis Joseph (which did not prevent me from being also received at the court of H. M. King Peter at Belgrade). Well! I am obliged to confess that the hospitality of a rajah far surpasses even that of the noblest and most fortunate of Magyars. But it is not my intention to relate here, one by one, the receptions, attentions, and surprises which the master of an Indian household can shower on his guests. Therefore I shall pass over in silence the dinners, balls, and *soirées,* the excursions on horseback, by auto, by coach, by yacht, the hunts on elephant-back,[1] the visits to palaces, temples, treasuries, the crematory, etc., which belong to the province of a private journal.

But the official Durbar! That marvel of the eyes! That dazzling exhibition of jewels! That extraordinary gathering of princes, courtiers, priests, and soldiers! That is what seems to me interesting to relate here, while I strive to banish all hyperbole from a style that involuntarily—perhaps contagiously?—becomes filled with pomp.

The religious festival. . . .

It is symbolic and unforgettable.

It is in a white patio of the old palace, under a dais of dark blue and white—the Kapurthalian

[1] See in my romance "Pârvati," the description of a tiger-hunt, with the Maharajah of Jeypore.

THE GATEWAY TO THE PALACE OF KAPURTHALA

A BRAHMANIC RELIGIOUS WEDDING

JEYPORE—THE PALACE OF THE WINDS

BENARES—THE BATH OF THE WIDOWS

colors. The priests are seated, after the Oriental fashion, on a thick Persian rug. There are about twenty of them, including the High Priest and the astrologer, who will soon read aloud the Sanskrit horoscope of His Highness. Grave and immovable, they keep their eyes fastened upon the altar, which is composed of a mosaic in tiny dots of white, red and blue, of the same design as the pavement of the patio, and figuring in its squares of equal size flowers, triangles, rosettes, ovals and the sacred lotus. . . . A stir among the crowd of privileged persons admitted below the dais—the women may not witness the ceremony except from high, half-open windows—a stir which increases and announces the approaching arrival of the sovereign. . . . Then a herald, followed by mace-bearers and guards announces: "His Highness, the Maharajah!"

He is seated now, the prince, the Prince Charming, whom all our high society is eager for. He is seated facing the High Priest, on a sofa of blue velvet, with golden braid. Three of his sons surround him: at his right the Princes Mahijit and Amarjit, already as serious as men; at the left, the young Prince Karamjit, with an eager, spiritual face—three students of the College of Normandy, at Clerès. The Crown Prince Paranjit is now in

England, where he is finishing his studies before his marriage, which will take place in two years.

But the ceremony is beginning. While a servant, armed with a white horse-hair fly-chaser, busily waves this new sort of fan, the priests bring up by turns, for the Maharajah to touch, bread, rice, sweetmeats, roses, as a sign of submission. Chanting begins; it is the priest's young assistants who are celebrating in Sanskrit the praises of their prince in an at first monotonous, minor strain, which grows faster until it soon turns into a voluble recitation of litanies. They distribute grains of rice among us so that, according to the ancient custom, we may throw them upon our amiable and hospitable host. The hail of rice falls abundantly upon the shoulders of His Highness, the symbol of our gratitude and respect! . . . Follows a long discourse by the High Priest and the performance of several rites, in which rice, flowers and salt play an important rôle, as well as a woolen cord of mingled strands of red, yellow and white, the signs of honesty, faithfulness and courage, which in the olden days the warriors never failed to fasten as scarfs across their breasts. Now the astrologer is drawing the horoscope of the sovereign, reading a long rigmarole, of which I can grasp only the beautiful characters written in red and black ink

on an interminable parchment adorned with cabalistic figures and signs.

Oh, the curious, the piquant allegorical custom which follows this tiresome listening! The Maharajah rises, followed by his suite, and seats himself in one of the scales of a wooden balance, which stands in one of the corners of the patio. On the other are black, white, green, yellow, red and gray sacks—containing respectively gold, silver, rice, grain, perfumes and fruit—which equal the monarch in weight. The symbolic weighing is carefully gone through seven times—seven, always seven, the fatal number which appears everywhere!—then the scale is emptied and the sacks are given to the poor. The king has ransomed himself in the eyes of his subjects. They bring up a horse, then a cow, both covered with scarlet saddle-cloths, decorated with green and gold. They are the presents of His Highness to the poorest among the priests. The privileged Brahman, whose turn it is now to bestow princely alms, leaves the group of his fellow priests, half prostrates himself before his benefactor, and goes out, leading the animals himself. The ceremonies, prayers, and chants are ended. All the ministers, chamberlains, courtiers, aides-de-camp and stewards of his civil household rush confusedly towards the Maharajah and bow

low before him, while they offer him a piece of money, which the sovereign merely touches. It is the *Mohour* again, the symbol of submission and feudal tribute.

The native music, rendered by flutes, clarinets, shrill fifes and tom-toms, bursts into a particularly pleasing harmony, adorned with a succession of fifths and reversed ninths, which would enchant Stravinsky, and cause the shades of Bazin, Gevaert and Fétis to tremble with indignation. Outside the cannon thunders. And also we hear faintly the blasts of the military trumpets. The crowd of guests files slowly out. As I am crossing the threshold, a priest presents me with a sacred cake, rolled up in a dry leaf, while another Brahman dips his thumb into a sort of yellow pomade, with a basis of saffron, and places it at the top of my nose, between the eyes, according to the rite of Siva. Then I notice that all my companions wear the same sign. During the whole day we must preserve this tattooing, which brings us from the Hindus many sympathetic smiles.

The military festival. . . .

A resplendent procession of uniforms in the dust of the military parade grounds, under a blazing sun, in the midst of the immense gathering of

people who have come from all the little towns in the neighborhood of the capital.

A great uproar rises from the crowd, anxiously bending forward to admire the fine carriage of the infantrymen, the martial spirit of the cavalry and the sang-froid of the cannoneers, grouped about their guns, which are fastened to zebus. The appearance of this Sikh army in its dark uniforms is really superb, this army whose loyalty served the English cause so faithfully in 1857, at the time of the Sepoy rebellion, in 1873 at the time of the expedition into Afghanistan, and finally from 1914-1918 on the European, Asiatic and African fields of battle during the World War.

It files past, brave, well-disciplined, its music at its head, a music of bugles, Scotch bagpipes and tambourines, before its chief, the Maharajah, dressed very simply, without any decorations, in a black dolman with a velvet collar, mounted on a light bay Burmese horse, surrounded by his aides-de-camp and the officers of his General Staff. The artillery divides into three portions its regulation salute of twenty-one cannon shots. The crackling of rifles splits the air: it is the infantrymen who are discharging their guns with joyous "hurrahs!" in honor of His Highness.

The social festival. . . .

It follows the feudal ceremony in the Palace of Justice where, in the throne-room, the civil and military functionaries solemnly renew their protestations of fealty and devotion while, in the Great Square, the royal elephants, caparisoned with rich howdahs covered with saddle-cloths, embroidered with gold and precious stones, majestically sway their trunks and their tusks encircled by three golden rings.

I hasten to add that it is an Oriental social fête. A delicate attention of the Maharajah has ordered all his court, all his guests—except, of course, his European guests, in their somber and banal black—to wear the national costume for great occasions: a turban set with rubies, emeralds and pearls, tunics and dalmatics of satin, velvet and iridescent brocades, incomparably embroidered. There is an Indian dinner: burning curries, ragouts of young partridges, bustards, and kids, ices of curdled milk, sprinkled over with pistachio nuts, betel leaves and small black seeds, of a spicy, somewhat camphorous flavor, the whole seasoned with popular music of the most fascinating effect.

And then the dancing girls. The Maharajah has had them brought expressly from Agra. Their orchestra of viols and tom-toms accompanies them

faintly. They dance, they sing. Their guttural voices cry out the lament and the suffering of love, and the contortions of their hands reveal the sharp pain of self-abandonment. For, if one may say so, they never move. It is a mute and half-immobile choreography, but how gripping and how expressive, when a sudden flame lights up the enigmatic shadows of their dark eyes!

And I think of the strange destiny of these Asiatic ballerinas, with their eyelids smeared with kohl, who come before me, their heads covered with pearls and their bare feet with rings, so different from the dancing girls celebrated by our poets, from those who delighted us in *Lakmé, The King of Lahore, The Grand Mogul.* With them all was convention. These, on the contrary, spring both by birth and their artistic profession from the hieratical dancer, and by their habits and their private lives from the professional prostitute. They are both religious and symbolic. They incarnate in song and dance the fabulous personages of the old myths of the primitive theogony. They are adored and petted by the people and the Brahmans and also by the rajahs because they are portrayers, in speech and action, of the great national epics, the ancient dramas of the Sanskrit and Aryan mythology. Superior by far to the indolent and

lascivious odalisque of the Levant, they are equally superior to the Nipponese Geishas, with their laughing eyes and little mincing gestures.

That bayadere there! Just watch her; she knows how to be by turns amorous, unhappy, ironical and terrible. Her chanting voice, accompanied by the faint tambourines and the diverse *vinas,* dear to the *soufis*—"dying viols" that gentle dreamer Mallarmé would have called them—a psalmody now high, now low, full of mysterious, disturbing and far-away melodies. Singling out one of the spectators, she undulates before him, fascinates him, and envelops him with her veiled song, with her almost motionless posturing. Presently, without any transition, she upbraids him, she curses him and then implores him, adjures him, with the desperate wringing of her hands and wrists, with the sobs of a stifled voice. It is beautiful and it is human, because she vibrates, laughs and weeps. Those powerful thinkers, the Hindus, have realized that this sort of woman, the national and religious *aède,* ought to be protected, free, emancipated and venerated.

Now I understand why the great potentates themselves bow down before this power, why they pay in gold—as much as three or four thousand

francs for an evening—for the stirring pantomime of these courtesan dancers. . . .

It is because they seem to be what they are in reality, the superhuman invokers of love and death.

CHAPTER VIII

BETROTHAL UNDER THE LAW OF MANU

Two years later—Nostalgia for India—I find in the heart of the Punjab the "upper crust" of the Faubourg—The exposition of gifts—An invisible bride—In which the Law of Manu shows itself less and less . . . gallant!

TWO years have gone by.

And now, once more India, which I have already surveyed once, from North to South and East to West, calls me. . . . Irresistibly!

How can I escape from this fascination? Rereading my notes, one idle evening, I have felt my soul filled with vague longings. Oh! to see again that country, those landscapes, those colors, that harmonious light which magnifies and defies the dullest gray! And then my book to be completed; so many gaps to be filled in, so many investigations to be continued, so many documents to be examined, verified, fathomed.

Come, the die is cast, Kapurthala shall see me

again; once more I shall taste the exquisite hospitality of its Parisian rajah.

A rajah who is indeed Parisian, for who can boast of being more so than this Amphitrion whom no nuance of our language or thought escapes, who has carried his love of France so far as for six years to confide his future daughter-in-law and Crown Princess to the care of such French friends as the Princess Amédée de Broglie, the Countess Rostaing de Pracomtal, the Dowager Princess de la Tour d'Auvergne, the Countess Gaston de Montesquiou-Fezensac, the Countess du Bourg de Bozas and many others of the great ones of our aristocracy, women with a full sense of their duty as well as elegant and envied women of the world?

It is not astonishing, therefore, that a sovereign so modern and so much in love with our taste and our art should wish all his French friends to be present at the celebration of the marriage of his eldest son, the Tikka-Sahib, Paranjit Singh, who has just returned from London, and the very young and charming Princess Brindahmâti of Jubbal, whose ancestors, of an illustrious Rajput caste, lost in the darkness of ages, go back, they say, to the sun as their progenitor.

Indeed, they have all come, these French friends, breaking their usual home-keeping habits,

leaving Paris, Egypt, the Côte d'Azur, to cross oceans and the tropics. Let us give their names without exception, for they are examples of quick decision and the love of adventure: Prince Antoine of Orleans and Braganza, Prince and Princess Amédée de Broglie, Prince Albert de Broglie, the Marquis and Marquise de Pothuau, General Baron de Sancy, Comtesse de Pracomtal, Marquis Pierre de Jaucourt, Baron Alexandre de Neufville, Comtes Charles and Jean de Polignac, Mme. Vlasto, Vicomte de Jumilhac, M. André de Fouquières, Comte and Comtesse de la Mettrie, Vicomte Jean de Brécey, Comtesse and Mlle. de Failly, M. René des Cheises, Comte Alphonse de Fleurieu, Vicomte de Geoffre de Chabrignac, M. Georges Brocheton, Vicomte Gontran de Barbentane, Comte de Charnières, M. and Mme. Alexandre Marcel, Comte de Buyer-Chaillot, M. Andrés Lataillade, Vicomte de la Motte, M. Zafiri, M. Saurès. On the English side, I remember the names of Generals Drummond and Powell, Lady Sassoon, Colonel and Miss Shackleton, the Governor of the Punjab, the Hon. W. Sykes, etc. . . . Finally, on the Hindu and Mussulman side, let us name H. H. the Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir, who has come with an escort of officers, chamberlains, a hundred servants, followed by his

favorite elephants, his horses, his camels, and his coaches; H. H. the Maharajah of Jhalawar, with his fabulous jewels—diamonds, emeralds, rubies—accompanied by his uncle, Bal-Bahr Singh; Their Highnesses the Rajahs of Poonch, Djagraon, Narpur, with glittering aigrettes and their motley suites of officials and retainers; H. H. the Aga-Khan, the first Nabob of India, the highest Mussulman personage of Asia, the direct descendant of Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet—a Parisian also, at this time thirty-three years of age, anything but a fanatic, who adores France and the French; other princes whose names and places of origin I do not know but who are there among us and offer, beside our persons, villainously dressed in European style, the regrettable contrast of silk with wool.

A great Hindu marriage is no ordinary event. It is an occasion for dazzling fêtes, unprecedented festivities, wild prodigalities and Rabelaisian feasts. It is the correct thing to ruin, or almost ruin, oneself. The "Paraître" of my intelligent and penetrating cousin, Maurice Donnay, finds here its completest and most exact application. One must spend, one must even squander; tomorrow will do for serious business and domestic economy! This does not extend to the guests

themselves who only watch what is going on and merely add their friendly or sumptuous contributions to the mad luxury that obtains among the wedding gifts.

They do not consist, these wedding gifts, as they do with us, of modest cases of jewels, silver, lace, furs, pianos, automobiles, etc. . . . The Hindu wedding boasts of more royal presents. Would you care to know, for example, what was the wedding gift of His Highness the Maharajah of Kashmir to the young couple of Kapurthala? An elephant, six horses, fifteen thousand rupees. The other princes, less rich than he, contented themselves with offering the betrothed: one, three camels, two horses, a dozen falcons; another, some Bokhara rugs, a collar of pearls, draperies embroidered with gold; others made their appearance preceded by a herald bearing sacks of precious stones in their matrix, or rough-hewn nuggets of gold. The exhibition of the gifts takes place, as in France, a few days before the marriage ceremony, but in the morning, from ten o'clock till noon, in a special room, guarded by two armed attendants. The groom, who alone is visible before the day of the marriage—the young girl being strictly secluded in the zenana of the ranees—does the honors generally of the inspection of the gifts,

many of which are reserved for him personally: arms, jewels, saddles, tennis rackets, polo sticks, etc.

There is something melancholy and saddening in the persistent and mysterious absence of the bride, who ought to be the queen, fêted, petted, complimented, of all these festivities. But the Hindu wedding custom permits no relaxation of this stringent system. Even if, like the Princess Brinda of Jubbal, the bride were strongly imbued with European civilization, this preventive sequestration would none the less take place. It is, in a sense, a preparatory novenna which she accomplishes now. Surrounded by the dowager queen, that is to say by the maharanee, the other ranees and their intimates, she trains herself and accustoms herself in advance to the double rôle of sovereign and wife which must soon be hers. The priests visit her and instruct her thoroughly in her duties—there is no question of her rights, which do not exist—and in certain obligations which the Law of Manu imposes on her.

This Law of Manu, of which I have already spoken but to which I must return, enacts, in regard to marriage, certain engaging, curious and yet poetic rules which, however, when taken together, reveal to us in what a condition of depend-

ence, of absolute servitude, even if mingled with respect, the Hindu wife has to be held. Finally, there are certain deliciously naïve counsels it gives, this Law of Manu, to those who are possessed by the legitimate desire to contract upright marriages. I cannot resist the amusement of quoting a few of them:

"Let him who wishes to marry not espouse a girl having red hair, or one limb too many (?), or who is often ill, or who is insupportable by virtue of her loquacity. But let him take a well-formed woman, who has the graceful gait of a swan or a young elephant (!) and whose hair is fine, her teeth small, her limbs of a pleasurable softness."

The legislator seems to have, perhaps from experience, an opinion of conjugal fidelity that is rather bitter and tarnished with skepticism:

"Even when shut in their apartments, under the guard of faithful and devoted men, women are by no means in surety; those only are so who guard themselves from their own will. Because of their passion for men, the inconstancy of their temper, and the lack of affection which is natural to them, it is in vain, here below, to guard them with vigilance; they will always be exposed to infidelity to their husbands."

"It is true that Manu has apportioned to women the love of pleasure and dress, concupiscence, anger, evil ways, the desire to do ill and perversity."

In what gallant terms these things are said! In the same way, the "Law for Men", according to Hervieu, is not embarrassed, in India, by all the hypocritical prolegomena of our Occidental divorces and separations. Has a woman ceased to please her husband? The latter does not need to have recourse to an extra-judicial examination or the proceedings of an attorney. A thorough repudiation, made before the Brahman, takes the place of the official proceedings of non-reconciliation, constituting *ipso facto* the divorce. As for the pretext for invoking it, on the part of the husband, the very eclectic Law of Manu furnishes him with a veritable assortment: he has only to choose among them according to his good pleasure, merely taking account of the circumstances of time and place.

"A sterile woman," declares the Law of Manu, "may be replaced at the end of eight years; one whose children are all dead, in the tenth year; one who has brought into the world only daughters (a stigma of inferiority) in the eleventh year; one who speaks sharply, at once.

"During one whole year, let a husband endure the aversion of his wife. But after one year, if she continues to hate him, let him take what property belongs to her, leaving her sufficient to subsist and clothe herself, and let him cease to live with her."

All these arrangements, all these paragraphs—of which I quote only the principal, the most salient ones—constitute the written law of marriage, the law applied to the letter, without restriction; no tempering of mildness or gentleness has encroached upon this assemblage of pitiless and meddling rules. The woman, on the day of her marriage, must walk, not beside her husband, but behind him, like a slave. It would be unseemly for her to be larger than her husband or for her head to be taller than his, the symbol of a future emancipation that would not be tolerated. Thus the "fashion" is for small brides, with smoothly combed hair held apart with fillets and naked feet —perish our Louis XIV heels!—such that the smallest husband will not be thrown into the shade. In Southern India—the coasts of Coromandel and Malabar—the wife is obliged, as a sign of submission, to place her foot over the real or imaginary print of each of her husband's footsteps; it would

be an excuse for the rupture of the marriage if this rule were not observed.

Such are the auspices under which the woman falls into the power of her husband. I have not deliberately blackened a picture already somber; but it is incontestable—and I believe uncontested—that of all married women, even the "disenchanted" Mohammedans, the Hindu is the most wretched and degraded. One of my friends, a Brahman of an ancient caste, who speaks and understands our language like a Loti or an Anatole France, has tried to explain to me, with the aid of an ingenious paradox, the reasons for this discreditable treatment of beings who are, in general, beautiful, gentle and virtuous. In his opinion, the Hindu wife is shut up and kept under this iron discipline through a spirit of respect on the part of the men, and notably of those who drew up the law concerning their way of life. The law-giver had considered—and with him all the Brahmans, the masters, the later initiates of the esoteric doctrine—that woman, because of the beauty and grandeur of her function, should be in some manner isolated, shut up, cloistered in a tower of ivory. Her mission, to procreate and raise up future generations, placed her above all contact and all profane contamination. Let us

admit the sophistry. It is in order to be highly esteemed, then, too sacrosanct, that the unfortunate woman today submits to be no longer human and to lead in the obscure emptiness of the zenana the stupidest and most degrading of existences.

Many maharajahs, refined, converted and modernized by our European customs, by their journeys to London or Paris as well as by their early instruction and their reading, have had the courage to affirm themselves reformers. Unfortunately, the movement as a whole has been only on the surface; the evolution will be slow. There are still so many of these princes who are barbarous, backward, retrograde, orthodox Hindus and secretly haters of everything foreign! Therefore one must admire without reserve those who, in spite of the obstruction of their priests or their ministers, strive to raise the condition of women in their States. That there exist, as in Baroda, schools for girls, or that they give their Crown Princess, as in Kapurthala, six years of instruction in Europe—the impulse remains beautiful and appears significant. One must not wish things to go too quickly in India. The ages have created feminine servitude; it cannot be abolished in a couple of years.

Evolution is not revolution.

CHAPTER IX

THE SIKH SEHRABANDI

Like father, like son—The Sehra, or taking of the masculine veil—An orgy of silk, velvet and gems—The Maharajah of Kashmir encircles with his hands the forehead of the groom—Again the Mohour!——

ET us take as an example of what I have just written the marriage of the Crown Prince (in Hindustani, Tikka-Sahib) of the Sikh State of Kapurthala, in the Punjab. I have already said that this prince—who is infinitely gracious and sympathetic—had, with his three brothers Mahijit, Amarjit and Karamjit, been brought up in France and England. I will add that he knows our language and speaks it fluently, that the college of Normandy, at Clerès, and the Lycée Janson at Sailly, have taught him to know and love the great names of our literary history, while his eye grew familiar with their busts, ranged along the façade of this latter institution of learning. It may be said of him that he is al-

most a European, and very much attached by his tastes, his natural inclinations, and his earliest education to this modern life, the advantages and charms of which have been revealed to him by his father.

Nevertheless, in spite of this undeniably Occidental education, H. H. Paranjit Singh was obliged to marry in the Hindu fashion the fiancée he had chosen freely, by whose side he had played and grown up in Europe, who was his childhood's friend in London and Paris. The same rites and the same ceremonial, the same sequestration of the bride during the days preceding her wedding, the same observance of the horoscopes and the same childishly symbolical, coarse and at times repulsive practices. But let us not anticipate; before giving as detailed an account as possible of the Hindu ceremony, let me say a word of the curious betrothal custom, in which the groom alone takes part, which bears the name of the Sehrabandi.

The Sehrabandi consists, properly speaking, of a taking of the veil on the part of the groom. It is an actual taking of the veil which, among the higher castes, is transformed into the placing on the groom's head of a golden fillet, from which hang many strings of pearls. This temporary conjugal head-dress is called the Sehrah. The honor

of placing it on the head of the future husband belongs to the noblest among the guests. At Kapurthala, it was the Maharajah of Kashmir who, with his own hands, encircled the forehead of the Tikka and showed him in this way the high esteem and consideration in which he held him.

The people are out, massed in dense crowds about the palace where the priests, the ministers of the court and the guests await the arrival of the procession. On the square rises the noble and proud esquestrian statue of the Maharajah Randhir Singh Bahadur, the grandfather of the present sovereign, which is surrounded by the thirty-two royal elephants, covered with their vivid saddle-cloths, decorated with gold braid, silver bells and precious stones. It has been no easy matter to range in line these colossal animals in the midst of the dense crowds, but the Mahouts (elephant drivers) are no novices, and they excel in directing the formidable pachyderms, without troubling either about the small boys, who dart under their feet, or the horses, most of which rear up in terror. Opposite the statue, an interminable cordon of troops spreads out its dark blue line, flanked on right and left by the Sikh lancers and the cavalry of the guard. The cannon thunder in the distance. Then His Highness' band strikes up the Kapur-

thalian national air, a sort of religious hymn, very simple, very short and rather melancholy.

And now there is the procession of uniforms, of marvelous costumes studded with diamonds and —let us not forget them also—elegant Parisian toilets. All this heterogeneous fashion of Europe and Asia is swallowed up under the portal, in the train of the maharajahs and princes. Each one takes his place among the seats reserved in the galleries or below the dais in the immense throne-room. The ceremony opens with a long address by the priests; then there are addresses of welcome pronounced by the Dewan (the prime minister) and by an important municipal delegation presided over by the Sahib Devindar Dass, the mayor of the capital. The first of the bayaderes, a star from Calcutta, who has been brought at a great price, and whose head is weighted down with pearls and rubies, then advances, her palms up, her head slightly bent, in an almost hieratic attitude. She recites, sings, dances and gives in pantomime a compliment suitable to the occasion; her voice, slightly nasal and monotonous, predicts an era of joy, of long life and prosperity for the young couple (observe that the bride is still absent). A small, unobtrusive orchestra of subdued viols and tom-toms beats time to her slow and undulating

dancing and follows her, step by step, but always at a respectful distance.

The dancing girl has finished her chant in its minor key—a chant which, to tell the truth, resembles a funeral dirge more than a song of happiness—and she slowly makes her way out, by one of the lower exits of the room, still accompanied by her musicians, and very conscious of the "favor" she has been willing to do the assembly in holding them under the charm of her art.

Then the Maharajah of Kashmir arises from his throne, takes the Sehrah from a little box offered him by an attendant and fastens it about the forehead of the young prince who, with a smile of assent, lends himself, with the best grace in the world, to this strange and most symbolic performance. Is he not quite familiar with the meaning of this allegory? He knows that this veil of pearls —which falls over his face, obscures his sight, and sometimes strikes the nose, the chin, the lips—is the sign of his betrothal with the fiancée whom no one sees and represents the interdiction which henceforth lies upon him to cast his eyes on any other woman than her whom he has chosen. I like the symbol. . . .

But look now, servants in the livery of the monarch bring to the feet of the Tikka several sacks

which give out a silvery sound. It is the Mohour, the feudal homage of the municipalities of which I have already spoken. At this signal, a crowd of courtiers and notables rise and then come back, their hands loaded with presents, ornaments, jewels, garments, stuffs, arms, trappings, etc., which they place, with a reverence, in the hands of two royal ushers. These offerings constitute, on the part of the donors, a gage of vassalage and fealty to their future sovereign. As we see, the Sehrabandi of a prince is not only the presentation of the groom to the nation, it is also an official recognition of his eventual succession to the throne.

Their Highnesses rise. The music again strikes up the national hymn. The betrothal ceremony is ended.

Motor cars, coaches, gala vehicles carry us across the city, decked with Kapurthalian flags and the Franco-British standards, to the pretty little tents of our European encampment.

CHAPTER X

THE WEDDING AT KAPURTHALA

Festivals and banquets—I win the elephant race—The French toast of our host—A madigral to the ladies of the French aristocracy—A broken glass a good omen—The Brahmanic ceremony and the Sikh rites—A procession from the Thousand and One Nights.

AS was suitable for a reigning prince, the Maharajah had been determined to have everything well done, not so much from the desire to dazzle his guests as from the purely friendly anxiety to assure them as much comfort as possible in their "camping out."

To this end, he had long in advance divided up and parceled out a large section of his park into even blocks, cut by central avenues and adjoining streets. Vast tents, about a hundred of them, had been specially set up as apartments, carpeted and decorated, with brick chimneys and electric lights, each consisting of three rooms and a bath. Each one of these tents, moreover, waited on by three

servants and an orderly, bore a number and the printed name of its single occupant. A curious and picturesque spectacle, indeed, that of these three encampments (Hindu, Mussulman, European), offering to the eye, from the high terraces of the French Palace, the suggestion of a new town risen from the earth like the cities of Alaska and stretching, all white, from the sunrise to the sunset.

From daybreak on, during these four days of enjoyment and in spite of the sharp cold which benumbed the fingers and covered the grass with white frost, cavaliers and amazons—Comte and Comtesse de la Mettrie, Vicomte Jean de Brécey, Comte Charles de Polignac, Vicomte de Geoffre de Chabrignac—had their mounts pawing the ground before their tents and set off gaily, intrepidly, "à la française" to explore the surroundings of the capital, plain or jungle, shady lanes or bare paths, or to breathe the regenerating air of the morning. Others gave themselves up to photography, to sports which make the soul freer and the body more joyful, tennis, pigeon-shooting, badminton, etc. Each day, I should say each hour, brought a new distraction, a fresh attraction, an unexpected surprise.

Shall I speak of the interest which from the

very first day I felt in the Hindu gymkhana? Feats of fakirs, fantastic performances by acrobats who walked on a tight-rope, carrying two donkeys tied together over their shoulders; fights between rams, which dashed their horned foreheads and their resounding skulls together like catapults, fights between cocks and quails, which ruffled up their crests and feathers, while they picked out with ferocious eye the spot in which they should strike the adversary a mortal blow; leaps of athletes to the back of one or several elephants; comic pantomimes or fantastic mock battles. And the military garden-party, on the last day! The exercises by turbaned gymnasts of divers colors, whose twistings and intercrossings made me think of the linear designs executed by the sokols of Prague, the charge of the lancers, the camel races, the elephant races—in which I had the honor, or the good luck, to be more exact, to come out first, distancing by the length of an elephant my friend Albert de Broglie, second, and André de Fouquières, third.

I should seem thankless if I passed over in silence the automobile excursions, the hunts with falcon and greyhound, the princely display of fireworks (which lasted three-quarters of an hour and included several set pieces), the illuminations,

the dances of the bayaderes, a European ball followed by a cotillion led by our countryman Fouquières and Mlle. Arlette de Failly; finally the delicious and Gargantuan banquet of three hundred covers, served in the hall of the Durbar, in the course of which the Maharajah, after an impressive speech in English, pronounced in our language, and without the least accent, the delicate toast which follows:

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I do not wish to miss the opportunity of telling you of the great pleasure it gives me today to receive my good friends from France, who have taken the trouble to come so far, especially in order to be present at the marriage of my son. I have endeavored to assure them a hospitality as comfortable as possible, and I hope they may carry away from their sojourn in my States a pleasant and lasting memory.

"You all know what a profound friendship I feel for your beautiful country, for its glories, its artists, its scholars, for everything that constitutes the patrimony and the genius of your race. Varied and somewhat complex sentiments, but which give a fairly exact idea of the pleasure I feel each time I return to Paris and have the agreeable opportunity of meeting you there again.

"I am particularly sensible of the coming among

us of His Royal and Imperial Highness, Prince Antoine of Orleans and Braganza, whose two brothers, the Princes Pierre and Louis, have already been my guests, a few years ago. Equally, I salute the presence at Kapurthala of Prince and Princess Amédée de Broglie, who also visited me twelve years ago, and who have this time given me the pleasure of bringing with them their son, Prince Albert. I am infinitely touched by the friendship which Princess Amédée de Broglie never ceases to show me, and also by the kindly interest she bears for my daughter-in-law, to whom she has been to this day the wise counselor and truest friend. I can promise that the young bride will never forget all the attention with which she has been showered in France, and especially by the Princess de Broglie, at the Château de Chaumont as well as in Paris.

"There is another friend of the Crown Princess whom I am anxious to thank quite particularly this evening; that is the Countess Rostaing de Pracomtal, who has been for my daughter-in-law a second mother as well as an admirable instructor. Better than anyone else, this great lady of your aristocracy has been able to inculcate in the young bride the precious elements of this modern Euro-

pean education, of which I wished the wife of my son to enjoy the experience.

"The benefits of this innovation belong to the future. So far as concerns myself, I have no reason for lack of confidence in this new method—without doubt, more of the world, more refined than ours—and I foresee, for our Indian daughters, a pure and definite alliance of the grace of the Occident with the modesty of the Orient!"

Is it necessary to add that this charming little discourse, spoken all in one breath, as it were, and without the least hesitation, aroused from the thirty or more French guests a veritable tumult of applause? Thereupon Prince Amédée de Broglie, whom death has since taken from my deferential sympathy, arose and, in a few well-chosen words, expressed to the monarch the sentiments of lively gratitude and respectful friendship of all his compatriots. Then André de Fouquières, in a warm and charming impromptu, constituted himself the bearer of the good wishes, to the young couple, of all the youth of France. "It is," he said in closing, "the custom to see an omen of happiness in the breaking of a glass on the wedding-day. Under these circumstances, I do not hesitate to break mine in honor of the bride and groom!" And the crystal, thrown violently against the floor,

THE "ANNOUNCER" OF A WEDDING

THE AUTHOR ON HIS HUNTING ELEPHANT

ELEPHANTS IN THE FLESH AND ELEPHANTS OF STONE

THE GREAT TEMPLE OF ANGKOR-VAT

shattered into fragments, amid the applause of the assembled company.

Today is the Great Day!

At seven in the morning, the European, Mussulman and Hindu encampments are awakened by the sound of deafening trumpets. The crowd crushes about the approaches to the palace and the steps of the temples in order to catch a momentary glimpse, as it passes, of the glittering procession of Asiatic kings and noble European guests. The women themselves seem to have departed, for once, from their native reserve: one sees them sitting, only half veiled—some of them have even dared to lift entirely their scarves of white or yellow muslin—on the terraces of the low houses that have been carefully chalked in honor of the occasion. The tradesmen have decorated their shops, small boys are chasing one another and throwing flowers under the eyes of the light-hearted policemen who are smiling at them with a half-grave, half-paternal air.

We have already taken our places in the court of the old palace, *Jalaokhana,* in the shade of an awning which faces the nuptial canopy of green velvet with golden fringes, beneath which the Brahmans will soon unite the young couple. Just opposite to us an awning striped with dark blue

and white (Kapurthalian colors) shelters the ministers, chamberlains, courtiers, officers and notables. Finally, before the altars of the priests, rises a second canopy, hung with marvelous stuffs, below which are placed thrones of gold and silver. It is here that the Maharajah and the princes are to sit, clad in their dalmatics embroidered in gold and encrusted with precious stones.

A flourish of trumpets bursts forth. . . . The cannon thunder. . . . Here come the official personages, one by one, in automobiles, in their coaches or on the *howdahs* or *umbabaris* of their elephants with the tinkling bells. . . . There is a pause. . . . Then, while the orchestra of the guard, brilliantly directed by Mr. Marshall, breaks into Mendelssohn's Wedding March, then into the March of Glory, composed for the occasion by your servant (a musician in his spare hours), a curtain rises at the back of the patio, where are concealed, behind grass screens, all the princesses of the zenana.

And now the bride appears, her face uncovered.

She advances slowly, a little grave, but radiant with beauty, grace and elegance. A long sari of old rose, almost salmon, silk drapes her body, as slim and supple as a vine of the jungle. A veil of the same color, slightly lowered on her forehead,

leaves a glimpse of the dark hair, parted and held with a fillet, after the Indian fashion. A heavy collar of splendid pearls, as large as nuts, encircles her neck, of a dull white in which can be clearly seen the ascendancy of the Aryan race. She reaches the nuptial dais and seats herself by the side of the Crown Prince, who is also in a superb costume of old rose silk, his head adorned with a white and gold turban, from which the Sehrah hangs down and in the center of which sparkles a flaming aigrette.

The Brahmanic ceremony begins, long, silent, slightly monotonous, curious, nevertheless, in its symbolic and evocative rites: the interlacing of flowers and grains of rice that form arabesques; the reading of horoscopes; recitations of Sanskrit prayers; the deciphering of ancient scrolls by hollow-voiced priests. The bridal couple are seated on rich, soft cushions; near them crouches their best man, the youngest of the four brothers, Prince Karamjit Singh, who plays the silent rôle of boy of honor, inseparable from the bride and groom.

Next follows the Sikh marriage, under another awning. Two priests, with venerable snow-white beards, read in muffled voices liturgical anthems drawn from the sacred book, the *Granth*. Others distribute allegorical flowers and rice, while seven

virgins, dressed in yellow, chant the responses in unison, accompanying themselves on a little portable harmonium, of which they themselves manage the bellows. Then the bride and groom rise, break the sacred cake, exchange the morsels and come and place themselves under the royal canopy, by the side of their parents and the crowned heads of the company.

The wedding ceremony is ended. The guests file past, quite as they do with us, in the narrow sacristies of our churches—and offer the young couple their congratulations and wishes for their happiness. Far off the artillery thunders, the troops present arms, the people deliriously acclaim their future sovereigns, the elephants wave their trunks and tinkle their little silver bells. . . .

There it is, the shining vision of the Orient of the past, of the days when the great Mogul emperors, Akbar, Shah-Jahan, Aurengzed, dazzled with their magnificence a conquered and prostrate India!

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

PART III

CHAPTER XI

TOWARDS THE AFGHAN FRONTIER

The attraction of the risk—Amritsar, its golden temple and its Lake of Immortality—Poor Lahore!—Peshawar and its interminable caravans—A raid on an unsubmissive country—Who goes? You cannot pass—A moment of anguish.

I HAVE said good-by to Kapurthala, to its Parisian artist-prince, its polished, gracious court, its brilliance and its splendors, and set out for northern India, which is so harsh, arid and aggressive.

My taste for adventure draws me irresistibly toward these wild and at times inaccessible regions of Pamir and Indo-Kooch, where the Pathans, the Afridis and the Afghans reign as masters, sowing death, ruin and terror about them. Louis Rousselet, who lived for five years in India, from 1863-1868, has written in his *India of the Rajahs:* "The next day I was at Peshawar, and thence I was able to look out over that terrible Afghan frontier which no one can approach without rushing to a

certain death. I should have greatly liked to prolong my excursion as far as the famous Khaïbar Pass where, in 1843, an English army of 10,000 men was completely wiped out by the Afghans. But I was told it would be impossible, as a few days before an English officer had been murdered not far from there." It must be admitted that things have greatly improved since 1868 and that it is practicable, today, to go as far as that famous Khyber Pass, misspelled by Rousselet, without running the danger of certain death. Three times a week the caravans, coming from Kabjul to Lahore, file from sunrise to sunset through this pass, which is guarded by armed battalions of Sepoys spread out along the road and a few batteries of artillery installed on the heights. So far as my knowledge goes, travelers and tourists who have not lingered in the pass after sunset have never run any risk. The Afridi bandits seem to have tacitly admitted this truce which has been imposed on them by force of arms and no longer trouble in these days the innumerable caravans that wind along over the historic and strategic road from India into Central Asia.

What is more difficult and dangerous is to reach this impenetrable and almost inviolate Afghan

frontier. But I shall have occasion to speak of this later in some detail.

On leaving Kapurthala, my first halt is Amritsar —an obligatory halt, an intensely interesting visit. Amritsar is not only one of the great cities of the Punjab, it is also, it is above all, the religious capital, the place of pilgrimage of the Sikhs. This sacred metropolis contains a marvel which the most *blasé* eyes cannot contemplate without a profound artistic emotion; I am speaking of the Temple of Gold and the Lake of Immortality. Imagine a great quadrangular basin, four acres or so in size, in the center of which rises, on an islet joined to the mainland by a marble jetty, a square building of delicate workmanship, the foundation of which is of marble and all the rest—the first floor and the roof—of pure and unalloyed gold. This roof alone is a gem of the goldsmith's work, with its dome and its four little Moorish towers. All along the fairy-like jetty are strung lanterns, half of marble, half of gold, which are illuminated at nightfall. There are no other guardians to protect these riches from theft or spoliation than a few old, turbaned fellows who are without arms. One would say that a sort of sacred terror protects this temple against any profane or sacrilegious violation. This is because in

the interior of the edifice lies the much venerated and dreaded Adi-Granth, the Koran of the Sikh guru, Nának, who received the divine inspiration in the sixteenth century of our era. Priests with gray and white beards are seated about the Book, which is veiled by muslin worked with gold; young officiating priests drone through their noses anthems in the minor key, and crowding pilgrims pass and repass and prostrate themselves before this Hindu Decalogue on which they fling grains of rice and loose petals.

Strange and poetic, this abstract, philosophical, symbolical religion which in so striking a manner resembles that of Islam.

From Amritsar I have gone on to Lahore. What a disillusion, this Lahore! . . . Is it because the euphony of the name, its association with Massenet's opera, and the romance of departed splendor which still clings to it make the imaginative Frenchman delude himself far in advance with chimeras, so that the reality at once appears to him very flat, very banal and quite insignificant? But this Lahore of tin and plaster produced in me as in all who visit it the same impression of disappointment and regret. This Rattan-Chands Temple, this Wazir Khan's Mosque, these tombs of Ranjit Singh's and Jehangir, this Golden

Mosque give the effect of a vulgarized reproduction, a sort of chromo of the magnificent examples of architecture and sculpture I have already seen. With the exception of the fountains of Shalimar, closely recalling those of Versailles and Saint-Cloud, which are surrounded by gardens and rectilinear perspectives that one would swear had been laid out by Le Nôtre—Lahore quite frankly does not deserve the honor of a visit, certainly not of a prolonged stay. I am broken-hearted to have to destroy an illusion which has been dear to many of my readers.

Through my car windows, I can see one desolate landscape follow another, in this cold, repellent, desert-like India. Here the ground is full of crevasses. There are no more of those beautiful valleys of the Punjab, no more of those clumps of trees beneath the shade of which the shepherd used to lead his flocks at noon. How strongly we feel the keen North wind, that harsh wind which comes from the high plateaus of Asia! . . . In the distance, the first spurs of the massive mountains of Pamir and of Indo-Kooch rise up in sharp silhouettes.

The next day I awake in a city that is no longer Indian—Peshawar—and which, because of its proximity to Afghanistan, wears an almost Persian

air. Everything here is Mussulman. The inhabitants, as one sees them in the streets, have their beards reddened with henna; they have shaven skulls, noses like eagle beaks, shifty, blinking eyes. Their turbans, flattened like pancakes, give them the surly air of mountain brigands, in the style of Edmond About. There are very few women, but on the other hand a great many children, some of them perched on buffaloes or donkeys, others between the camels' humps, those grave and peaceful camels which encumber the streets while they ruminate philosophically on the emptiness of all earthly destinies.

The principal attraction of Peshawar, I will even say the only attraction of this frontier town of 90,000 inhabitants, in which are mingled all the northern races of the peninsula, Afghans, Pathans, Afridis, Baluchis, Kashmirians and Persians, is the excursion to the famous Khyber Pass, that strategic defile through which the Russians might formerly have invaded India. Today, because of the Anglo-Russian political alliance, this eventuality is fortunately no longer to be feared. I say "fortunately" since because of it I was able to go as far as the advance posts of the Indo-Afghan hinterland, and therefore, it was thanks to the Triple

Entente that I was able to set foot, somewhat illicitly, on forbidden territory.

In the early morning I am awakened by the Lieutenant-Colonel from Kergariou (with whom I have had the pleasure of traversing this region on the way from Kapurthala). He is as stiff with cold as I am, after a night passed in shivering in his uncomfortable and icy room. The government of Peshawar has very graciously given us all the necessary permits, and even authorized us to attach ourselves to a mission sent by the General Staff to carry instructions to the distant outposts of Landi-Kotal. An open automobile carries us rapidly across the town and its suburbs, then along the white, dusty road. Our companions are amiable English officers, distinctly gentlemen; I notice that they all carry revolvers in their belts, and that the chauffeur and the two Sepoys who escort us, squatting on the running boards, are armed with rifles and have their belts full of cartridges. Hum! Hum! This has quite an air of war, or in any case of an armed expedition into a rebellious and inhospitable country, infested with Afridi bandits, robbers, cutthroats, torturers, who are only held in check by the fear of the guns of the forts. Moreover, our expedition—the governor has urged this on us—must take place only between

sunrise and sunset; otherwise the adventure is at our own risk and peril.

The narrow gorge which we have now entered is austere and grandiose as a landscape of Dante. There is no verdure, no grassy slope, no bush or shrub, nothing but stone and sand. Above our heads the caravan route unrolls in a long network. It is an interminable procession of camels, buffaloes and mules which, by the thousand, transport from Peshawar to Kabjul, or vice versa, the goods that are exchanged between these two great Asiatic markets. One might think it was a Biblical exodus, a flight of the Hebrews after one of those plagues of which the Scripture speaks. A unique spectacle, such as I have seen nowhere, even in China and Mongolia! This narrow ribbon of beasts of burden, stretching over *several miles* of roadway, absolutely disconcerts the imagination; it remains with me even more as a geographical than as a pictorial vision.

The gorge continues; in spite of myself it reminds me of the Pass of the Axe where Flaubert imprisoned his mercenaries alive. We, too (if these bands of robbers were organized, centralized and commanded by a daring emir), we should never be able to escape alive from this pass. The sting of possible danger thrills our *amour-propre*

deliciously. But suddenly the ravine broadens out, we leave behind Ali-Mosjid, a little mosque which seems to bar the way. The last Sepoy outposts salute us. Beyond is the beginning of the forbidden territory, the Indo-Afghan hinterland of which I have spoken. Henceforth we have no one to depend upon but ourselves, our little escort and a few miles away the batteries of heavy artillery of the English post of Landi-Kotal. What a terrible desert now opens before our eyes! A flat uniformity, yellow and sandy, sprinkled here and there with granite boulders. On the road—can one call this a road!—we no longer pass a single living thing, man or beast. In the distance, a massive mountain range cuts against the indigo of the sky; then white patches that grow clearer; then a collection of tumuli which are nothing else than the first Afghan houses of beaten earth, at the frontier post where India definitely ceases.

In the afternoon, after the excellent lunch which is offered us by the British officers in their comfortable block-house, we visit the little village, its markets, its mosques and its tombs. Very strange, these tombs, earthen mounds, hillocks surmounted by staves from which banners float, and they make one realize that Central Asia is only a league away. An examination of the shops reveals

nothing European; one finds there only goods for barter, articles of immediate utility, no knick-knacks, no vanities. The tourist—let us rather say the traveler—so rarely, so exceptionally ventures into these regions! Before us, as we look down from the citadel, the great valley that leads to Kabul extends indefinitely, flanked by the chains of Pamir and the Indo-Kooch, the foothills of which sink away at our very feet. A few hundred meters from us is the frontier of Afghanistan. We see it with our eyes quite clearly, not marked as in Europe or by a painted or emblazoned post, but simply indicated by a cabin of refuge, a sort of sentry-box of flat bricks, commanding the strategic route. All the caravans which we have just encountered, those innumerable strings of camels, buffaloes, and mules, that tattered Biblical exodus, all have had to defile under the pitiless eye of the khan and his soldiers. The papers are minutely verified and stamped; no fraud is possible as regards the identity of the caravaners, who must all prove their nationality as Afghans. The European, no matter how profound his knowledge of their language and customs, would never pass the scrutinizing glances of these customs men *di primo cartello.*

I question the officers; I am seized with a some-

AMRITSAR—THE TEMPLE OF GOLD AND THE LAKE OF IMMORTALITY

AMRITSAR—A STREET SCENE

THE ROCK AND THE PLAIN OF GWALIOR

THE TERRACES AT FUTTEHPORE SIKRI, NEAR AGRA

what childish curiosity to approach these sentries. Can I do it without risk? Major S— smiles, shakes his head and politely advises me not to do anything. It does not do to trifle with these rude mountaineers who do not understand pleasantries. They might misinterpret my intention, imagining that I wished to violate their territory; a pistol shot is a matter of a moment. Very well, I shall be wise. And besides, I may well consider myself as highly privileged to have been able to approach so closely the forbidden region. There are not many others who can boast of that.

Our mission is at an end; our English guides and we ourselves quickly make our farewells to the little garrison of Landi-Kotal. We must hurry, for the sun has begun to sink towards the horizon; it would not be good to have a breakdown in the midst of the hinterland, or even at the beginning of the Khyber Pass. Let us be off, then! Our automobile starts, flies down the slopes, fords the torrents at the risk of stalling the motor. . . . What does it matter? We must be out of this at all costs before night falls. We cross on our return journey the interminable ribbon of caravans encountered on the way out. Then we reach the beginning of the defile. At a sharp turning, great fragments of rock roll over our road and come

near to upsetting us and pulverizing us. I raise my head and perceive in an open space above us, on a ridge, turbaned and grimacing faces, trying to conceal themselves. At a gesture of the officer who commands us, one of the Sepoys makes a movement as if to put his rifle to his shoulder. The heads have disappeared. It has all happened so quickly that I wonder if, for an instant, I have not been the subject of an hallucination.

God be praised! As the first stars shine out, we have passed the dangerous zone. Henceforth we are in Indian territory, once more the guests, friends and protégés of noble England.

Just the same, I cannot think of this little day's frolic without telling myself that I almost lived there a page of adventurous romance.

CHAPTER XII

ON THE ROCK OF GWALIOR

An islet lost . . . on land—A critical ascent—Gods and genii in high relief—The hundredth tiger—"Refreshments" with wild animals—A Nimrod and a philanthropist—Deserted streets—What the secretary, His Highness's chamberlain, qualifies as a "very big word."

DO you know Sark, the pearl of the Channel Islands? It rises abruptly above the Channel, long and narrow like the spine of a wild beast ready to spring; not a beach, not a harbor; one lands there "à la brusque," as the sailors say.

I thought of the basalt islet, this morning, as I made the ascent of the Rock of Gwalior. It rises out of the endless plain like an island lost in the sea; like Sark, it has the same wild aspect, the same jagged setting where the exiled Hugo conceived his desperate struggle between Gilliatt and the octopus.

At the foot of the fastness—whither an armored

"side-car," emblazoned with His Highness's arms, came to deposit me—an elephant awaits me, accoutred with bells and decked with a scarlet saddle-cloth bordered with green. We are off! . . . We are climbing the difficult slope to the rock itself. This road is so hard, so painful to the pachyderm's feet, the upward slope is so steep, that they have had to hollow out a sort of series of steps in its inclined plane. Every plunge of the animal makes me pitch in an alarming fashion; I am seized with an appalling fear as we hug this precipice over which I feel myself in danger every instant of being thrown. And then, if the girth were to burst? . . . Come, let us not think of all these things, let us stiffen ourselves, let us cling tight. *Sursum corda!* What a fairyland, that expanse of white houses, those palaces, those temples and those parks, those ponds and, further off, that yellow desert, broken by little copses and high grasses—the preserve where the king hunts the tiger—all this seen from aloft, from an altitude that almost gives one vertigo. . . . And what an incomparable situation from the strategic point of view! They tell me that the Mahratta sovereigns knew how to take advantage of it and surrounded it with an enclosure of strong ramparts that closely hugged the sides of the island—lost on land!

I can understand, therefore, the difficulties of the English in conquering this stronghold which in olden times was considered impregnable. Many are the things to be seen from this platform: the ancient zenana, decorated in the Mussulman fashion with arabesques and with little lozenges in blue porcelain of a most graceful effect; the prison of the captives, barely lighted with a tiny window, which was peopled by the mere royal caprice. Further away is the Bhao, a heavy, thickset temple, the general conception of which somewhat recalls the Khmer monuments and about which run allegorical bas-reliefs. Then a well, a cemetery. . . .

But the veritable marvel is the descent on the other side of the rock. It is a sloping descent, the length of the monolithic block, where the Jainist devotion of this people has hollowed and sculptured gigantic high-reliefs which one sees as one passes by, under the hanging bindweeds. An orgy of sculpture! There are large figures and small, middle-sized, fat, thin, upright, seated, recumbent, kneeling and especially crouching—of these gods and prophets with their great almond-shaped eyes, whose mouths keep ever at the line of the lips a scoffing, evil expression. And the goddesses! I see here and there a swarm, a profusion, a super-

abundance, all slim and large-hipped, with the great toe lifted up, guarding in their attitude and their gestures a little of that gloomy passivity which made them, even in the Brahmanic Olympus, inferiors and not equals. Then, those colossal nudes: the Tirthankaras, Adinath and Parvasnath, two of the twenty-four precursors and founders of the Jain schism. And others of the chiefs, mutilated but still menacing and fierce. . . .

This descent, on the back of an elephant, through this thicket of divinities, demoniac, terrible, sneering—it is India, all India, concrete and synthesized!

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At the foot of the fortress, Lashkar, the coquettish little modern town with its shining, immaculate terraces, lives like an indolent, pampered parasite at the expense of the prince, who is one of the most hospitable alive.

"He is also a mighty hunter before the Lord," remarked one of his chamberlains who accompanied me and took me to visit the palace. "You know, Monsieur, that His Highness has just exceeded his hundredth tiger! I might add that he is a devoted naturalist. You see these glass cases?"

Indeed, I make my homage to the taste and the spirit of classification which have presided over the installation of this museum. Everything is labeled in the European fashion; there are specimens, in these collections, which our museums would have good reason to envy. The Maharajah's predilection for animals has caused him to divide off, along the edge of the harem, two great spaces planted with shrubs and trees, surrounded by high walls and reserved, one for lions, the other for tigers. The magnificent animals move there at their ease, leaping and snorting at liberty in a surrounding space of ten or twelve acres. A kiosk has been set on top of the wall at each corner, to enable the guests of His Highness to take tea while watching the animals feed—a truly Neronian spectacle! Swarms of eagles, vultures and crows soar and flutter above the arenas, watching the gazelle or the live hare which the great cats are already fascinating with their phosphorescent eyes. On the ridge of the walls the peacocks smooth with their beaks their sumptuous, unreal feathers, indifferent to the approaching carnage. There is the very note of Asia.

And all about, the parks. . . . Parks combed by an army of expert gardeners, parks irrigated by canals, so vast that, in order to cross them, even

to take care of them, the king has built a little railway through them, which also connects the palace and the station. Everywhere an unbridled luxury of domesticity. Everywhere, too, I hasten to add, a generous royal care to embellish the capital and succor the poor. He is a philanthropist, this prince; I can see it in the way in which he has organized the municipal and sanitary services of his city. I think I am dreaming as I observe the cleanliness of this great street of Sarafa which leads to the square of the same name. There are several striking new buildings there, in a gay, Oriental style, resembling those of Bombay: the bazaar, the European theater, the printing-house, the Victoria Memorial covered market, the treasury, the post office. Still, it all rings out of tune in this distinctly Asiatic scene, in this dust where the dogs frolic helter-skelter as they once did in Constantinople, on this road where the native *ikkas* and other uncouth vehicles roll by.

There is little life in the streets. I am struck by this and I cannot resist asking an explanation from His Highness's special secretary who receives us in the prince's absence; the latter is unable to return until tomorrow, in time for the "purdah-party" arranged by the Maharanee. We are in the great Hall of Welcome in the old palace

(that of the guests is called the "Meeting"). The courtier approaches me and, lowering his voice, visibly embarrassed by my question, murmurs:

"Yes, it is true. You must have been surprised at the lack of movement in our town. . . . Gwalior is rather dead just now. . . . It is because—how shall I put it?—we have been having lately some little difficulties with health. . . ."

"An epidemic, no doubt?"

"Oh! good heavens, that is a very big word. . . ."

"Still. . . ."

"There has been a panic among our townspeople; they have gone out to the suburbs, to the country. As a result we have scarcely more than one hundred thousand inhabitants. Ah! it is not as it was in 1902. Then we had twenty thousand deaths. This time there are only a few thousand cases."

"The plague, is it?"

"Yes, but don't be uneasy—we have the ampullas. You know, this new serum? . . ."

Charming!

There is nothing to do but go and have our tea.

CHAPTER XIII

TWO MONGOLIAN CAPITALS

An Englishman who knows how to see—A few words on the castes—Shah Jahan, the Great Mogul—A "dream of marble"—Muntaz-i-Mahal, the Chosen of the Palace—The most beautiful mausoleum in the universe—A human game of checkers—Sympathetic Islam.

WILL you believe it? I have left Gwalior under an excellent impression, in spite of the little sword of Damocles of the plague and the serum ampullas. My greatest desire is to return and even to have a long stay there. Just now, the Punjab Mail is carrying me with all the speed of a great, privileged express train toward the North, or, more exactly, toward Agra and Delhi, the two ancient Mongol capitals with their walls of marble, encrusted with precious stones.

In the train I have made the acquaintance of an Englishman, a certain friendly Mr. James Mayor who has a wonderful knowledge of India

and gives me many savory details of its inhabitants. Thus I learn from him that a good Hindu should not die in a bed but on the ground, even on the soil, upon which he ought to breathe out his last breath; the rich, once they are dead and stretched out on the ground, have drops of the water of Hurdwar sprinkled in their mouths. As for the famous *suttees,* the funeral pyres of widows, they are no longer seen. Eight years ago, near Calcutta, a widow claimed the honor of being burned alive with the corpse of her husband. Before mounting the funeral pile, in order to harden herself, she imitated Mucius Scevola and burned off her right hand in the light of a lamp. The Court of Bengal condemned those who took part and their accomplices to seven years in prison. Since then, no similar instances have reached the knowledge of the authorities.

And the Tchemmâs? Mr. Mayor tells me a very curious anecdote about those pariahs who repair boots, or serve as ditch-diggers, or empty the dirty water in hotels, under the name of Bhisties or Metters. One day two European sportsmen had been drowned in a pond while shooting ducks. A Sepoy passed, saw them and summoned two natives to go and fish them out again. The latter, who belonged to the modest but honorable caste

of the Vaisyâs, refused with indignation, alleging that a task so unclean could be undertaken only by Tchemmâs. They were obliged to go two miles away to get villagers of a still more humble caste than that of the Vaisyâs. But they were not the desired Tchemmâs, and it was only at the point of the rifle that these villagers undertook the task.

I could spend hours listening to this Englishman, who knows how to observe at the same time that he is attending to his business. Did you ever chance to run across certain people with the potentialities of talent, even of genius, in art, science, pure thought? Aptitudes in germination stifled by the prosaic cares of the material life, which thus deprive humanity of much intellectual wealth? They pass and only graze their true destiny.

This Mr. Mayor, whom I shall probably never see again, is one of these, perhaps. Otherwise he would have a whole book to write on India *(and* the English). . . . Never mind. This superficial conversation on the train with an affable stranger, who disappears at a junction station without giving me his card or his address in India or elsewhere, suddenly illumines for me, as with a flash of light, the edges of the abyss which separates the European from the Hindu: that of the castes.

An impassable gulf which would suffice to prevent all intercourse between two natives, unknown to one another, and whom the accident of a journey had brought together on the opposite benches of the same second or third class compartment! For example, no contact would be possible between a Brahman and a Vaisyâ. At the mere sight of the sacred band of the Brahmans, worn like a scarf by no matter what ragamuffin, the latter would immediately and instinctively take himself off with a sort of religious terror. Ah! these implacable castes, the origin of which is lost in the mist of ages; they form, indeed, the most impassable barrier against the spread of Occidental civilization.

The sacred books of antiquity all agree in stating that this never-to-be-altered classification emanated from Brahma himself, who drew the Brahmans from his head (or, according to another version, from his mouth), the Kchatryâs from his arms, the Vaisyâs from his stomach, and the Soudrâs from his feet. And how many other degrees there are all along the length of this ladder! . . . That coolie who is carrying a load on his head would never carry it on his shoulders; he who sells oil cannot sell grain; a cook would never condescend to pluck his chicken; the butler of an orthodox household would never touch a jar of

water. Why? The explanation (I should say the explanations) of these phenomena would require volumes, without counting the commentaries. Short of undertaking a detailed monograph on these social distinctions—which would be beyond the scope of this book that I have dedicated especially to the mysteries of India—would it not be better to admit frankly and simply that there are persons born to be shoemakers, tailors, or barbers, and others to be potters, goldsmiths or fishermen, finally others to carry the parasol of the nawab or to goad the rajah's elephant?—imposed vocations to which they must all submit, willy-nilly, but in which they believe, which they practise and from which they never escape under pain of losing caste and falling into the impure mob of the pariahs, the Poulias and other outcasts. Nor must it be imagined that this punishment is reserved for the lower classes. No less than the inferior Soudrâs, the superior Vaisyâs and Kchatryâs, even the Brahmans can be subject to this supreme catastrophe.

This explains so many dreary or despairing marriages between young people of the same rank who, under pain of losing caste, are forbidden by the terrible Law of Manu to form an alliance with any other caste. The degradation attached to any

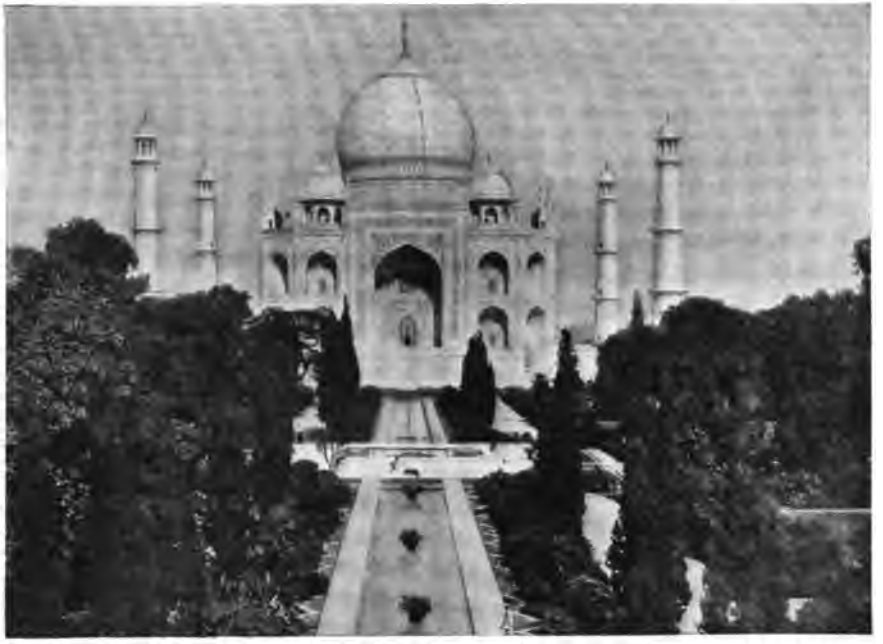
such infraction—that is to say, the loss of caste, would be equally incurred in other cases, such as touching a pariah, the forgetfulness of certain religious practices, the use of forbidden foods. Against this force of inertia, endured with so much passivity or fanaticism, all the Catholic and Protestant evangelical attempts have beaten fruitlessly, without any hope of success. Buddhism itself, the great leveler of social conditions, has been unavailing and almost powerless before the omnipotence of the Brahmans and the blind obstinacy of their followers—I was about to say their victims.

The superior caste of the Brahmans is itself infinitely subdivided. The day on which it ceases to exist will mark the end of all the others, which exist only as its satellites. Although I shall have occasion to speak in several chapters of this book about the officiating or priestly Brahmans, it seems worth while to slip in a few brief observations concerning the society of the Brahmans, from which these excessively influential priests are recruited.

In the first place, the following exterior and distinctive signs reveal them to the veneration of the faithful: the symbolic mark on the forehead, the shaven head with the little tuft at the top (like

the Mussulman), the uncovered throat, allowing the crossed cord of hemp or wool to be seen. Those among them who do not take the vows of their religion are allowed to wear a long robe and a turban; their wives also wear the large veil and a narrow, sleeveless garment which covers the upper part of their bodies. The most learned among them are astronomers or astrologers. Others, the Pandidapapans, are the secretaries of princes or the cashiers of banks; still others, the Tatiodipapans, consecrated to Sivâ, live on offerings in exchange for prayers; finally others, the real ecclesiastics, are in charge of the services in the Vishnu pagodas. Among these last, who are called Papan-Vaishenavans, we may distinguish the Vanasprastras, who must be at least forty years of age, and the Sanyashis or hermits, who can count twenty-two full years of solitude and contemplation.

The second superior caste, that of the Kchatryâs, seems to have been, from all time, dedicated to the profession of arms. That is to say, it includes in its ranks potentates and warriors, from the noblest and most virile blood in India, whether the fortune of their birth has made them Hindu maharajahs, or their conversion to the Mohammedan faith has made them nawabs. Look at their



AGRA—THE MAUSOLEUM OF THE TAJ-MAHAL

AGRA—THE SULTANAS' PISCINA

MADRAS—AN INSURGENT HINDU BEING TAKEN TO PRISON

women; they are all, irrespective of their religious faith (since we are speaking here of social classes), dressed in the richest and most varicolored garments, living in sumptuous surroundings, in an unheard-of luxury as regards dress, servants, houses, camels and elephants. To this caste, to speak geographically and ethnographically, belong the Mahrattas, the Rajputs, the Sikhs and also the Naïrs of Malabar, who still practise the communization of women.

Let us pass to the Vaisyâs, the third category in the religious order. This is also a rich caste which is composed of agriculturists, cattle breeders, gardeners, wholesale merchants, in general well clad and with good incomes, who are curiously divided into tribes of the right and the left hand and who, with the exception of the tribe of the Banians, are permitted to use meat. And finally, let us say a word about the Soudrâs, the fourth and last of the superior castes. These include the following trades: artisans, workmen, servants, constrained under pain of utter disgrace to follow the paternal profession. Whoever is born a blacksmith cannot die a laundryman, and so forth. Especially noteworthy is the case of the potters or Cossevers, all of them votaries of Sivâ Tandava. They are not included in the classifications of the right-hand

and the left-hand tribes, a privilege that has fallen to them from the consideration in which the Indians hold the manufacture, repairing, preservation and purity of vases and jars, and also the rôle of bandaging and caring for wounds which has devolved upon them. Certain of these potters who are charged with the manufacture of sacred utensils have become rajahs. Nevertheless, there is nothing in the professional apparatus of these men which sharply differentiates it from other work: a simple horizontal wheel, turning on a pivot which enables them to shape the clay. The potters' wives all wear a large waist-cloth of dotted linen, which leaves one breast and a portion of the abdomen uncovered. The incredible lightness of the vases manufactured by their husbands allows them to carry as many as seven or eight on their heads.

Succeeding the Soudrâs come the inferior, humbler and—let us admit it—somewhat despised castes, the mixed products of illegitimate marriages between different ranks of society, and benefitting in a fashion from a tacit and legal amnesty. After these, in a vile and obscure medley, come the Parayans or pariahs of the North and the Poulias of the South, who are synonymous with shame and infamy. However much it may affront our pride

as Europeans, we, in the eyes of Hindus of good caste, are included among those who are disinherited by birth. I will add, by way of some consolation, that the same is true of Mussulmen, like ourselves impure eaters of cows. The pariahs, to give them their generic name, practise the lowest and most despised of trades. They skin animals that have died of sickness, tan the skin and feed on their flesh. All pure castes are forbidden to use anything that has even been touched by them, such as wells from which they have drawn water. A pariah who merely dared to sit down on the margin of an ordinary well would inevitably be stoned. Born under the stigma of an indelible opprobrium, these unfortunates camp outside of the common walls; in the fields they are given the most arid spots and the ones that are the furthest removed from any inhabited center. It is therefore not astonishing that they have become what such a law of proscription would naturally make them, coarse, fierce creatures, dirty and shameless. The same is true of the Poulias of the Malabar coast, slaves of the quasi-Kchatryâ Naïrs, who live in an even more wretched state of abject misery, relegated to the unwholesome rice-plantations, lodged pell-mell in insanitary huts, fallen so low that they have not the right to look a Hindu of an inferior

caste in the face, so that some of them, wandering in the mountains or perched on trees, are reduced, when they are hungry, to howling dismally and striking their stomachs.

Whatever may be said by our theosophists of London and Paris, who are in love with esoteric Brahmanism and Vedantism, such religious and social excesses condemn a great people, meant for a noble and glorious destiny, to eternal servitude.

Agra! The marble glory of Agra!

A white frame, of a polar whiteness that fatigues the retina, through which move in a confused mass palanquins, carts, dervishes with beards reddened with henna or dyed a paradoxical vermilion, madmen with uneasy eyes, groaning cripples, stage-players and mountebanks with up-curled Turkish slippers—like those of the Greek *evzones* at the Tournoyante Fustanelle—fakirs holding on a leash a couple of fighting rams with gilded horns. Few or no women. How typical this all is of northern India!

I visit the Fort at once. People have said to me: "You will be astonished!" I am more than that; I am overwhelmed, yes, positively overwhelmed with admiration and emotion. Imagine a dream mosque of purest white marble, with exquisitely proportioned, symmetrical bell-towers, with vast

paved courtyards, with aerial colonnades that support an open-work roof, and you will perhaps have some idea of what my eyes are contemplating at this moment. There in this Diwan-i-Am, Shah Jahan, the Great Mogul, dispensed justice on his black throne; here in this Naginah Musjid, reserved for the ladies of the court, this same Shah Jahan was held as a prisoner of state by his own son, Aurengzed; further on, in that little octagonal pavilion which has no name and which looks out over the clayey waters of the Djumna, Shah Jahan —still he, always he—died with his nearly sightless eyes fastened upon the Taj-Mahal, which he had built for the glory of his well-loved wife, Arjmand Banu, surnamed Muntaz-i-Mahal, the Chosen One of the Palace.

The next day, in memory of the sublime lover, I make a pilgrimage to this royal mausoleum which Sir Edwin Arnold has called "the marvel of Agra, the crown of the world, the tomb without a peer." Others have called it "the Dream of Marble." . . . It is a large building of white marble, veined with pearl gray and flanked by four minarets, rising from a platform and approached by a straight avenue bordered with low cypresses and made beautiful with fountain-basins, in the French style. In fact, we can recognize here

the signature of one of Le Nôtre's pupils, one of our countrymen named Austin de Bordeaux, whom Shah Jahan engaged in 1630 as architect in chief. At his order and at great expense they brought the white marble from Rájputána, the yellow marble from the coasts of Nerbuddah, the black marble from Chaorkoh, crystal from China, jasper from the Punjab, cornelian from Bagdad, turquoise from Thibet, agate from Yunnan, lapis-lazuli and sapphires from Ceylon, coral from Arabia, diamonds from Punnah (Bundelkund)—many of these precious stones were torn from their settings at the taking of Agra by the British troops —onyx from Persia and finally amethysts from the Urals. More than 20,000 workmen toiled uninterruptedly for seventeen years at this tomb of unearthly beauty, the apotheosis of the love of the most munificent of husbands. That was four centuries ago. . . . And today, tomorrow, forever human eyes will fill with tears at the sight of the two tombs, side by side, in which these perfect lovers sleep their last sleep.

Still other mausoleums add to the glory of Agra, without, however, having cost those who built them what the Taj cost—33 millions! For example, there is that of Prince Etmad-Dowlah, on the hither side of the Djumna, a large monument

with four towers of white marble, also like lace-work, which are adorned with rich incrustations and delicate sculptures; and there is that of Akbar the Mogul at Sikandra, of an extraordinary majesty of line and proportion. A few miles further on, by automobile, I reach the Mussulman Pompeii: Futtehpore Sikri. I give it the name Mussulman Pompeii intentionally, because its founding by Akbar was the result of a desire expressed by his favorite. She complained at Agra of headaches and indispositions; so the Emperor, in order to please her, presently decided to move with his court and take up his residence at Futtehpore Sikri. A whole forest of stone rises up there, intact, deserted, abandoned, for this caprice of the sultana lasted only ten years. Everything has remained, in order, immutably calm and beautiful. One might call it a city asleep. . . .

How many women, even those whom the Roy-Soleil loved, have been the object of a worship so gallant? Perhaps only Scheherezade, whom Dr. J. C. Mardrus has resuscitated for us in his incomparable translation of the *Thousand and One Nights.*

This Mongolian epopee of the Bahadur-Shahs, of the Jahangirs, I am evoking at this moment at Delhi—at Delhi which today has become the capi-

tal of the Empire, the victorious rival of Calcutta.

Through the gate of Lahore, following the crenelated walls—this northern India is certainly made up of citadels—I enter the Fort. The same magnificence as at Agra, the same abundance of decorated, filigreed, carefully carved buildings. Here, too, Austin de Bordeaux left his stamp, particularly on that flagged pavement on the Square of the Emperor, which represents flowers and animals on a black background. Elsewhere there are the baths of the courtesans; further off is the Moti-Musjid, or pearl of the mosques, ideally white. Finally, the Diwan-i-Khas draws my delighted glance. Was it not there that Akbar, seated on the "Throne of the Peacocks" (at present in the possession of the Shah of Persia), pronounced that famous sentence which his successors had inlaid along the cornices: *"If there is a heaven upon earth, it is here. It is here. Here alone."*

Another royal fantasy. In one of these courts, the name of which I have forgotten, a great square of black and white flagstones served as a checkerboard for the same emperor. Black-skinned or white-skinned slaves, real knights, the Indian equivalent for bishops, towers, a sultana and a vassal prince served as living chessmen for the august player who, from an elevated seat, directed

the game with his ivory scepter against his partner Dewan, seated on the other side. The whole astonished court watched this unusual contest and applauded the fortunate moves of the Grand Mogul.

There are so many, many things to see in this Delhi, justly called the Rome of Asia, that if the traveler wishes to see the rest of India he is obliged to limit somewhat the scope of his investigations. To tell the truth, at the time of my first visit I had not sufficiently seen Delhi and its environs; I had to complete my visit during the course of my second trip to India. So I pushed on to the ruins of Katub-Minar, where rises a tower of pink granite two hundred and forty-one feet high and with three hundred and seventy-nine steps, built in the twelfth century of our era to commemorate Mussulman victories. Very stirring, also, is that tomb of the poet Emir-Khusram, whose glory approaches that of Firdousi! And so many others, which I can still see with my mind's eye. . . . A tedious enumeration! These things have to be seen. Description can give only an imperfect idea of them, because it lacks that sun, that color, that atmosphere which are its triumphant aureole. This is the case, for example, with the Djumna-Musjid, the most beautiful mosque in the world

(just as the Taj of Agra is incontestably the greatest mausoleum in the universe). It was built in 1644 by Shah Jahan; five thousand workmen took part in the construction of its three monumental stairways of forty steps each, its court, in which 10,000 of the faithful can gather about the fountain of ablutions, its gateways, its domes, and its minarets, from which the muezzin calls out his summons at the hours of prayer. A revel of marble, a debauch of porphyry and onyx! And all this to shelter a few precious relics—old Korans of the twelfth century, slippers of the Prophet, filled with jasmine, carrying the imprint of his feet, *one* hair from his mustache. . . . This veneration does not make me smile. I am too infinitely respectful of religions and faiths of which the sincerity and piety are above question. The Mohammedan confession in India is so decked with splendor that one forgets its puerilities and extravagances and can feel for it only a charmed sympathy.

Is this change of attitude due to the enthusiasm of art that seizes you irresistibly in these two fairy-like capitals, or to the intrinsic virtue of Islam?

Montaigne would have said: "How can I know?"

And Rabelais: "Perhaps!"

CHAPTER XIV

HOLY MUTTRA

In the heart of an eclogue—Life and adventures of an Aryan Mélibée—The eighth avatar of Vishnu—A gay god—The paradise of beasts—The meeting with a five-footed cow—Are these reptiles?—The vegetarian invocation to Krishna.

BETWEEN Agra and Delhi, on one of the banks of the Djumna, far from the profane glance of the impure *méleks* (as they call such sacrilegious "eaters of cattle" as ourselves) rise the terraces of the pretty and picturesque little city of Muttra. By some miracle it has escaped the attention of the organizers of "Tours in India." The Cook parties never or rarely include it in their itinerary. No hotel, no restaurant, no bar, not even postal cards! A unique state of things which enchants me. For all this, we must not be egoists and—since a high official in Delhi advised me secretly to make a pilgrimage to this holy city dedicated

to the memory of Krishna the Seducer—let us share with our readers the benefit of this good fortune. So much the better if those of them who are going to travel in India some day are enabled to enjoy, as I did, one of the most delicious impressions of freshness in this country, so grand but usually so somber and tormented.

Nothing, in spite of all, is easier than to get to Muttra, a station which, I repeat, is on the line that connects the two ancient Mongol capitals. It is a good thing to provide ourselves in advance with a comfortable and substantial lunch, unless we wish to brave the cruel station kitchen. In a quarter of an hour, a vehicle of sorts will go down the slope which leads to the Djumna and deposit you in the very center of the city. This city, if I may be pardoned for the comparison, is the Paray-le-Monial of India, Benares remaining always and in spite of everything the Lourdes. There are the same crowds of pilgrims, the same sellers of votive offerings and medals, the same veneration and the same conviction. Only the miracles are lacking. But on the other hand, what marvelous, what original things to be observed and how utterly delightful to discover them!

. . . It was a great many hundred years ago. Vishnu, the preserving principle of the Trimourti,

decided to descend once more from the heaven of the Gôpis to the earth. It was his eighth avatar. Thus says the *Paramâtman:*

"He made himself the prince's shepherd, did Krishna,
To reveal the divine nature to the tyrant king,
Kamça. . . ."

It was indeed a bucolic transformation, poetic and gallant, even the very least bit licentious—very "eighteenth century" and Watteauesque—and which, I imagine, must have been a great rest to Vishnu, exhausted and worn out by his seven preceding avatars.

You may judge for yourself: 1, the fish Matsyâ, to save mankind from the deluge; 2, the tortoise Kûrma, to serve as a solid base for Mount Mérou; 3, the wild boar, Varâha, to make the earth rise out of his back; 4, half-man, half-lion, to slay the demon Hiranyâkaçipou; 5, the dwarf Vamân, to conquer the world from the giant Bali; 6, the Brahman Paraçou-Ramâ, to exterminate the Kchâtryas, the oppressors; 7, Prince Ramâ-Tchandra, to overthrow Râvana, king of the Râkchazas. . . . All very elusive and very terrible tasks, and, in any case, most fatiguing.

Now the idyll opens, and the god gives himself up to it with all his heart. After having crushed the wicked serpent Kali, he goes all over the coun-

tryside with his flocks, pulls their garments off the bathing girls, talks gallantry to the shepherdesses, plays the flute for them, profits by their inattention to milk their cows under their noses, and finally seduces them all, or nearly all—16,000, according to the sacred books. Then this flighty lover, this Hindu Lovelace, would have begun his sentimental escapades all over again, if Brahma and Sivâ had not energetically restored order. Did not one of his last pranks—if I may be pardoned the irreverence of the word—bring him a severe reproof from his peers? Listen to this verse from the *Purânas,* in which Krishna deserts nothing more nor less than a goddess, his wife—I should say one of his wives, the devi Râdha, to fly to the arms of a simple nymph, the delightful Viraja! This is too much! . . . And the incorrigible fellow is summarily recalled to propriety and to heaven. Vishnu's only punishment will be having to repair, a few centuries later, the too human follies of that bad fellow, his representative, at the time when he is stigmatizing Buddhism the liberator, Buddhism the abolisher of castes, Buddhism the rival which, in its turn, is to conquer the world.

"From a watcher of flocks, he made himself a Buddhist monk,
In order to preach false doctrines to the impious. . . ."

Truly, now, do you not find it amusing, the earthly adventure of this gay god, who is pugnacious, something of a practical joker and very much of a rake? It is Pan, breathing in his flute, or Apollo singing. . . . Heu! Woe to you, passing beauties, who listen to him.

Muttra celebrates all this, Muttra that knew the joyous bathing parties of the Aryan Mélibée and the prolonged siestas under the tender leaves of the *moussendes* and the flowering *ixoras,* and the mad pursuits of the brown-skinned dryads, crowned with jasmines, cinnamon flowers and white roses, the moonlight talks when the divine shepherd with the indigo skin—as the old miniatures show him—held under the charm of his persuasive tongue the village girls and the great white zebus kneeling around him. A fresh oasis in which the imagination rests and relaxes after the fevers and the ghostly oppressions of Ellora, that somber crypt with its nightmare pandemonium. I shall think of it later, this Eden-like Muttra, when I explore the putrid ghats of Benares and the sinister caverns of Madura. For me Muttra will always exhale the gentle and intoxicating perfume of an eclogue:

"*. . . sub tegmine fagi.*"

And what a touching intimacy—others might say promiscuity—of beasts with men! . . . Because Krishna petted them, these dumb and humbler brothers, the people revere them today. In the market-place, little prying foxes and white-headed vultures share fraternally the scraps of food that lie about under the paternal and debonair eyes of the gray buffaloes. Up above, on the roofs of the houses, swarms of monkeys (the city numbers more than 10,000 of them) gravely hunt for fleas. In a few moments they will come gambolling down from the cornices to collect their scraps from the human feasts. I shall touch them, I shall almost caress them—*almost*—for one would think they suspected that I am not one of their own people, I who in the Occident shut up their kindred in barred prisons! . . . But how amusing they are to watch, these four-handed beasts, so "natural" in their grimaces, their suppleness, their malice, and also in the maternal rocking of their little ones.

Noon. I pass a procession in rags and tatters. A strolling showman is leading about the miracle of his five-footed calf ("a teratological foot that protrudes from its back"). Loungers accompany him. Not gamins but full-grown men, old men, a few women, their amber-colored arms holding

DELHI—THE DIWANIKHAS OF THE GREAT MOGULS

DELHI—THE FIRST IMPERIAL ENCLOSURE AND THE GATE OF LAHORE

MUTTRA—BATHING ON THE BANKS OF THE DJUMNA

MUTTRA—THE MARKET-PLACE

copper jars on their heads over their twisted black hair. This procession makes its way towards the Djumna, where the calf is going to drink. Very well, let us follow it, since at Muttra the temples are, so to speak, "on strike" and it is the river which sanctifies and listens to prayers. We go down obscure little streets, little nameless streets which enchant me; then the quay. Laughing girls, wrapped in their dripping saris, are returning from their ablutions, a pomegranate flower, red as a wound, in the corner of their lips. Let us make haste! Suppose they are the last! . . .

But now, close to the last steps which are lapped by the sacred waters, there rises a confused commotion: bubbles of air rise and break on the surface, the stir increases, then there appear thin necks, surmounted by the heads of reptiles. . . . Instinctively I recoil. The fear of the cobra is before all else the beginning of wisdom. But I quickly discover my mistake: my pseudo-serpents are only inoffensive, gluttonous freshwater turtles. There are hundreds, thousands, myriads of them, despite the voracity of the crocodiles and the gavials. The most audacious now climb up on to the flags, between my feet, between the four normal feet of the miraculous calf. Nothing could surprise that calf; it drinks its water ingenuously, in

little draughts, without hurrying, like a calf who knows what is due him for his quasi-divine deformity; and the liquid falling from his disgusting lips is at once collected by ten trembling hands, armed with goblets. I turn with a slight repulsion from these drinkers, these mad hierophants.

And then this spontaneous generation of tortoises attracts and amazes me so!

Suddenly, at my side, a soft singing begins, a nasal humming through a closed mouth. The bubbling begins again, a new crop of flat heads rise from the yellow water: stretched necks, toothless mouths, opening to receive before they fall the daily doles of boiled rice flung to them by the priests, with the august gesture of sowers of grain.

* * * * * *

Kind and simple folk, observing to the letter the charitable doctrine of the *Baghavadgita*, O people of Muttra, who protect and give lodging to your monkeys, who feed your foxes, your vultures and your tortoises, deign to receive here the praise of an infamous *mélek!*

And thou, Krishna, may thy Virgilian example disgust me forever with the sacrilegious beefsteak!

CHAPTER XV

INDIA ONCE REVOLTED HERE

In the country of Nana-Sahib—Souvenirs of the Insurrection of 1857—The massacre at the Bridge of Cawnpore—At the scene of the drama—The heroic resistance of the garrison of Lucknow—When will the complete pacification take place?

EVER since the Imperial Government took the place of the old India Company, assuming the general direction of affairs and the exploitation of the country, no serious revolt has taken place among these vast agglomerations of peoples, none, that is, except the famous insurrection of 1857, called the Sepoy Mutiny.

Because the Hindus, Mohammedans or Brahmanists have attempted only once, at the instigation of such a daring Mahratta agitator as Nana-Sahib, to free themselves from the European yoke, should we conclude that there has been an actual pacification of the peoples of this peninsula? It

would be bold to affirm this. There still remains in these same Mahratta provinces of Gwalior and Baroda, and also in Rájputána and Bengal, a serious ferment of hatred which is developing and reveals itself in the outward signs of an ill-dissimulated phobia against their alien guests. A proof of this was the Shwadeshist movement of the Babus, at the time of the recent troubles over the Partition, or the administrative separation, of Assam from Bengal. Everyone knows that there exist in Calcutta secret societies, the ramifications of which extend as far as Burmah. Propaganda by deeds, direct action, political assassination have been widely advocated. Before the Great War of 1914-1918, not a month passed without a bomb's bursting in the capital, without a train's being derailed on one of the great lines, without a revolver being fired in the heart of the Bengal University itself, leading to disturbances and street riots. The formidable world conflagration suddenly revealed to us an India remaining loyal, save for a few insignificant troubles in the northeast and on the Afghan frontier, along that same Khyber Pass of which I have already spoken. In this way Great Britain was able to put to the test, as France did with its Barbary possessions, the loyalty of the Brahman, Buddhist, Mohammedan and Jain pop-

ulation of its vast and rich colony. This means that, more than ever, she will wish her vassals to benefit from that great *pax Britannica,* the excellent results of which I have already praised elsewhere.

Nevertheless, who knows whether these same Sepoys, whose exploits in Belgium and France, as well as in Palestine and Mesopotamia, we have watched sympathetically, might not, if they had wished it, in 1857, especially if they had known how, have liberated India forever from her Occidental masters? . . . We can say today that all they lacked was continuity of effort, the mutual help of their chiefs, solidarity among their religious parties, in short, order and organization. I am thinking of all this in the express which carries me towards the two cities which formerly revolted, Cawnpore and Lucknow.

Cawnpore! A mournful name that always sounds in English ears like the echo of one of the most frightful dramas in history! . . . We remember that the native troops of this garrison revolted in 1857, following some offense to their religious convictions. The deposed prince, Nana-Sahib, placed himself at the head of the rebels and came to besiege the British troops at Cawnpore, commanded by General Wheeler. The wily ra-

jah, impatient over the time lost because of this unexpected resistance, proposed to the besieged that they should receive the honors of war, boats to take them as far as Allahabad, as well as sufficient provisions to feed them until they reached there. These overtures, at first received with some distrust, were finally accepted by General Wheeler under the protection of a solemn oath by Nana-Sahib, who swore on a cow's tail that he would loyally observe the conditions of the surrender.

But let us leave the story to one of the eye-witnesses: "On the morning of June 27," he relates, "the women, the children and the wounded were carried by elephant-back to the quay, where about twenty boats, large and small, were waiting for them. The able-bodied men arrived at the same point after having filed with arms and equipment past the besieging army. When they had embarked all flung themselves with a sort of joy upon the food that had been prepared for them, and abandoned themselves to the current of the river. Then a long distance battery, which had been got ready, was unmasked along the shore and began to fire upon them. The smaller boats sank, others caught fire. Horsemen, plunging into the river, sabered most of the drowning ones who tried to save themselves by swimming. Only the craft

on which was the general was able to use oars and get away. Unfortunately, the boat went aground a short distance from there and those who were on it, sixty Europeans, twenty-five women, a little boy and three young girls, were taken back as prisoners to Cawnpore."

Then occurred the atrocious crime, the slaughter without parallel in the history of colonial conquests, the frightful Massacre of the Well, of which an English officer who arrived a few hours too late has given us this haunting description:

"Hardly had we entered Cawnpore," he says, "when we rushed to find those poor women whom we knew were in the hands of the odious Nana; but we soon learned of the frightful execution. Tortured by a terrible thirst for vengeance and filled with the thought of the frightful sufferings these unhappy victims had had to endure, we felt strange and savage ideas awake in us. Burning with anger and half mad we rushed toward the terrible place of martyrdom. Coagulated blood, mixed with nameless débris, covered the ground of the little room in which they had been imprisoned and rose to our ankles. Long tresses of silky hair, torn shreds of dresses, children's little shoes and playthings were strewn over the befouled earth. The walls, smeared with blood, bore the

traces of frightful agonies. I picked up a little prayer-book the first page of which bore these touching inscriptions: '27 June, left the boats. . . . 7 July, prisoners of Nana; fatal day!' But these were by no means the only horrors that awaited us. Far more horrible still was the sight of that deep and narrow well in which were heaped up the mutilated remains of these tender creatures."

I was anxious to visit the sinister spot. In the Memorial Garden there rises, in the midst of the most splendid roses imaginable, a simple cross of white marble which marks the spot where those unfortunates were murdered before being flung, still quivering, in the cistern a few steps away. Today the curb of the well is surmounted by an angel, holding palms in its arms, a touching statue which the Italian sculptor, Marochetti, dedicated to the memory of the martyrs.

Less mournful but quite as eloquent are the relics of the heroic English resistance at Lucknow, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Oudh. How many souvenirs there are of the mutiny in this residency, this Sikandra Bagh, where 2,000 Sepoys were killed, and in this Dilluska Palace where General Havelock died!

It was a veteran of the siege, Sergeant Ireland, who did me the honors of the ruined but glorious

bombarded citadel. Everything has remained unchanged in its place. It is a spot of pilgrimage and of patriotic commemoration. From the moment of entering, under the gate called Bailey Guard, we have the feeling of a desperate struggle, mad, heroic, against an enemy superior in numbers and assisted by fire. What astonishing strength of character, what extraordinary tenacity on the part of the besieged, surrounded and vastly outnumbered, as we were in 1870 at Châteaudun!

My guide explains to me how, surprised by the revolt, the Europeans living in the city had taken refuge in this residency. The feeble British garrison, commanded by Sir Henry Lawrence, had made haste to join them. The palace, a three-story brick building, was in no way suitable for a defense; nevertheless, the refugees maintained themselves there valiantly for five months, under the fire of bombs which had reduced the dwelling to a thin shell, crumbling and smoking. When General Campbell arrived with reinforcements under the walls of Lucknow, and after a two days' battle (the issue of which was for some time uncertain) had succeeded in delivering the besieged, Sir Henry Lawrence and the greater part of his intrepid companions had paid for the defense of the place with their lives.

How far away this all seems to me, in spite of the anecdotes of the veteran who accompanies me! Such a change has taken place in the soul of the Indians since these events, that I find myself wondering if the domination of the English is not as final here as our own in Algeria and Tunis.

I should not wish to give even the slightest offense to my Bengali and other nationalist friends in India, but, between ourselves, I cannot see how a change in the immediate order of things would immediately benefit them. India is not a country, it is a mosaic of countries, far more so than even the Central Empires. What I do believe is that Great Britain will not fail to show herself infinitely grateful to her Asiatic vassals for the help they gave her in 1914-1918 on the battlefields of Europe and Mesopotamia. What I believe is that this same Great Britain will also not forget that the troops and the populations remaining in Indian territory refused to profit by this unique occasion to rise against their sovereign. Finally I believe that King George V—the first to dare to be crowned Emperor at Delhi—will deign to extend to his faithful subjects a still more open and friendly hand, and one stripped forever of the ancient iron gauntlet.

On that day there will be in the land of Brahma

the same great joy that there was in South Africa on the return of Botha, the conqueror of the German forces of Southwest Africa, hero and protagonist of the definitive Anglo-Boer union.

CHAPTER XVI

BRAHMANS ON THE BANKS OF THE GANGES

Benares in the morning—Cremations of the upper, middle and lower castes—The horror of the funeral pyres of the Pariahs—The Brahman lives off the altar—Priests of the Temple of the Cows and the Temple of the Monkeys—Yogis and Parahamsas—Sublime words of the Baghavadgita.

TO speak of the Brahmans, is not that to speak of Benares, the soil from which they spring?

Benares is the most astonishing, the most formidable fact that can be imagined. One must have seen Benares in the morning, as one must have contemplated Stamboul at noon, and Venice at sunset. Light mists float and gather above the yellow waves of the Ganges, in which have already been mingled, as they passed Allahabad, the privileged ashes of the dead. Along the ghats or the terraced quays, a whole population is busy with its ablutions: old men bent with age, men with vigorous, bronzed bodies, women and young girls

with sinuous shapes, amphoras on their heads, laughing, turbulent children. Further off, there are the widows, shaved according to the rite of Siva and going their way sadly, silently, despised, almost cursed, bowed under the weight of immemorial prejudice.

On the banks the priests have already lighted, a few at a time, the funeral pyres that will soon reduce to ashes the miserable cast-off garment of our earthly pride. Here I am again struck by the persistence of the castes, castes that are so rigorous and uncompromising in the affairs of everyday living. On these funeral pyres their proud hierarchy still makes itself felt after life. Thus at Benares there are three different sorts of cremations: those of the Brahmans and Kchâtryas; those of the middle classes—Vaisyâs and Soudrâs; finally those of the lower castes, the Pariahs, Tchemmâs and others.

The cremation of the dead member of an upper caste includes many special rites, prayers, incantations and other practices. The corpse is first brought on a litter, covered with a large shroud, white for men, pink for women. Still enveloped in his winding sheet, the dead man is stretched by the river-side, the head and trunk resting on the bank, the lower limbs bathed by the water, for

purification. During this time, the funeral Brahmans finish arranging in rectangular and symmetrical order the pieces of wood which compose the burning-ghat. The corpse is then laid upon it, while other faggots are placed above forming a second bed. Generally, the whole is so harmoniously arranged that the dead man almost disappears under the mass. The priests then approach and pronounce the liturgical prayers, while they sprinkle the fire with melted butter and sweet-smelling oils. Young officiating priests throw Indian pinks and jasmine petals into the flames. Then once more and without any break, the priests add the sticks, the faggots and the kindling necessary to feed the devastating fire. For once the cremation has begun it must not be interrupted. If the fire went out or died down it would be considered as a bad omen.

The funeral pyres reserved for the lower castes are composed only of faggots, roots and left-over logs not yet attacked by the fire, gathered confusedly together, without order or elegance, in a nearly square pile, on the river bank, far from the palace and the votive temples. One young Brahman suffices to light the fire and pronounce the necessary incantations. The relatives, the friends and the domestic animals are grouped about him

in an impassive attitude that is intensely Oriental, and watch with great serenity the work of destruction.

More sinister and gruesome are those I shall call the *famine pyres* on which are heaped up pell-mell emaciated, contorted skeletons of bodies, hideous to see, naked, their faces twisted with agony, with glassy eyes no hand has closed. These last must content themselves with what others have left, half-burned faggots, knotty, smoking roots, which the flame has been powerless to attack, armfuls of damp straw, giving forth an acrid and suffocating smoke. For these there are no incantations, no fire sparkles joyfully, the incineration is long and slow, lasting not merely for hours but at times for one or two days. No one comes to claim these ignored, accursed, disinherited ashes.

Such is the inexorable decree of Karmâ.

We may well imagine that these cremations and other ritualistic ceremonies do not fail to bring in to the Brahman a pretty penny. Of this priest it may be truly said that he lives off the altar, without, however, attaining to the princely tithes of certain orthodox popes of the former Holy Russian Empire. At Benares, the number of these officiators is almost incalculable; even approximate statistics have never been compiled. There

are the funeral Brahmans of whom I have just spoken, there are Brahmans by the thousand for the temples in the city, without counting those who serve private altars and sanctuaries, there are Brahmans charged with watching over the upkeep of the sacred animals, and finally, there are Yogis, or living saints.

I have spoken, in connection with the pilgrimage of Krishna to Muttra on the Djumna, of the inviolable respect of the Hindus for all manifestations of life, and especially of animal life. At Muttra, the traveler notices the presence of many thousands of monkeys living a sort of common life with the inhabitants, sharing their food and their dwellings—just as at noon great jars of boiled rice are thrown to feed the tortoises on the river terraces. At Benares it is something else: the Paradise of Cows, in the full meaning of the phrase! These blissful beasts stroll over the conquered country, along the ghats or through the dark, dirty little streets; at their pleasure, they impudently steal vegetables under the noses and beards of the merchants, who watch them with good-natured smiles, thanking the divinity for the signal honor of her visit.

Nor is this all; the horned guests of the Temple of Cows at Benares have their regularly appointed

RUINS OF THE LUCKNOW MUTINY

THE PALACE AT LUCKNOW

BENARES—A LOW-CASTE CREMATION

A MORNING AT BENARES

priests and are the object, on the part of the faithful, of a thousand marks of veneration and love. They feed them with aromatic herbs, they bring them offerings, they wash them with water from the Ganges drawn in richly chased vessels of copper and silver. Finally, it is not rare to see certain fanatics gliding through the dark colonnades of porphyry and marble under the domes with their massive golden roofs, watching for the peaceful animals to give way to the most necessary and prosaic of needs. . . . Then there is a mad rush for the fresh dung; some smear their faces and hands with it; some go so far as to swallow a bit of it; still others carry it off in reliquaries.

Beside these ultra-realistic and repulsive spectacles—it is true that the Parsee teaching also has such aberrations—I have had occasion to notice many touching acts of piety and kindness to old, infirm or sick animals. One day when I was descending the steps to the Ganges, I saw an old, half-paralyzed cow (the bovine race reaches here what Hugo calls "the age of a great-grandparent") dragging herself painfully along by her front legs to get a drink from the waters of the great river. When she had drunk, feeling she had become heavier, this bovine "Burgrave" attempted in vain to return to the spot which she had for-

merly occupied. At once four young pilgrims, who seemed to belong to a good bourgeois caste, hurried to the animal, lifted it, and succeeded by one means or another in getting it back to its original position. I offer this fact, without comment, to the president of our Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Another curiosity of Benares is the Temple of Monkeys. Several hundred years ago the great temple raised to the goddess Durga was invaded one day by a troup of monkeys come, no one knew how, from the near-by jungle. The quadrumanes installed themselves even in the sanctuary and on the borders of the fishpond, with its encircling steps, where slept a noisome, greenish water. The superstition of the Hindus was struck by this prodigy; they saw in the presence of the monkeys a heavenly embassy sent by Hanuman, the monkey-god and ally of men, whose combats and warrior virtues were celebrated by the sacred books. From that day forward the altar of the goddess was deserted; prayers and pilgrimages were devoted no longer to Durga the Dark, but to Hanuman the Valorous. Today, this population of monkeys has risen to several hundreds of grimacing and gesticulating families; and it is one of the tourist's amusements, in passing through Benares, to bring

them fruits and dainties, which they share fraternally with the goats and pigs, under the eyes of their two Brahman guardians.

Above these inferior priests, dominating them with all his serene and somewhat disdainful pride, rises the noble figure of the Yogi, the living saint, the Master, he who really possesses the power of assembling the elements and performing miracles. He is by no means the servant of the animals nor does he make any sale or display of his office or his science; he does not market it or make any money out of it. But modest, or conscious of his formidable power, he hides or isolates himself from humankind. You no longer, or almost never, meet him in the low plains of the peninsula of Hindustan; you must go in search of him to discover him in his almost inaccessible retreats among the high mountains of Kashmir or Thibet, where he is learning to become, little by little, the Parahamsa, the Sage.

Ripened by prayer and solitary meditation, mastering his senses and abolishing Desire, which is useless to him since in him, as a pantheist, there resides the essence of all things, he turns his will exclusively toward the final evolution. A detached fragment of the Great Whole, he tends to mount up by stages to his primitive and divine

state, and in order to attain it he seeks for the primal cause of the world. By means of his eyes man is master of Space; the Yogi, by means of his science, creates a new sense which makes him master of Time. He seeks to penetrate to the sealed mysteries of Matter by means of pure Thought, and in actual practice by means of magic and incantations. This is the secret of the *mentrams,* the mentrams that preserve one from the stings of bees, from the venom of serpents and the claws of wild beasts; mentrams which, they say, have power over domestic animals, over rivers, over the elements. By means of them the Yogi can reach even the Unknowable. The same procedure was carried on in antiquity by the Egyptian adorers of Horus, the Greek mystagogues of Ceres, a few philosophers, philanthropists and thaumaturgists like Pythagoras, Apollonius of Tyana, Buddha, Rama-Krishna, and other occultists who have had the certainty of the Divine Experience. These supermen cross the threshold of the Esoteric Doctrine, they have the intuition of universal knowledge and probably approach Brahma the Neuter, the Ineffable, the Absolute, of which Brahma, the masculine and creative expression, has only a single temple in India—at Polkhar, near Ajmeere

—Brahma the Infinite, whose name the Hindus never pronounce without trembling.

Would you believe it? The Yogi is the object of such veneration that at his death he escapes the ordinary cremation of other men, kings, priests, soldiers, artisans, beggars and pariahs, piled up on the brazier of the burning-ghats. Death, great leveler that it is, nevertheless distinguishes him from other mortals. They enclose his body in a coffin, or more often in a clay jar, and let it sink solemnly to the bottom of the Ganges. A perfect symbol, such a burial as this, of the favor which, in permitting him to escape destruction by fire (Agni), facilitates in this way the cycle of his future incarnations.

So wills, so teaches the Baghavadgita, in which Krishna, addressing his disciples, utters these admirable words which Saint Augustine and the Fathers of the Church would not have disavowed:

"You bear within yourself a divine soul of which you are not aware, for God resides in the soul of every man, but few know how to find Him there. The man who sacrifices his desires and his works to the Being from whom proceed the principles of all things and by whom the universe has been formed, obtains perfection through this sacrifice and approaches God.

"Moreover, you must know that he who has found God is delivered from re-birth and from death, from old age and from grief and drinks the water of immortality."

CHAPTER XVII

BENARES AND ITS FAKIRS

The mysterious quarter of Kashi—True and false fakirs—Conjurers, hypnotists and illusionists—The sincerity of the psychometrists—Voluntary martyrs and men with withered limbs—The miracle of the buried alive—Contemplators—The fakir condemned to eat and to do nothing—Absolution without . . . perfect contrition.

THIS spectacle of the Brahmans on the banks of the Ganges or in their temples, is still merely a general, superficial, external spectacle that can satisfy only the tourist, the globe-trotter. The philosopher must seek further if he wishes to make his deductions. Plunging to the depths of this abyss of obscurities and splendors, he ignores the sink of impurities, the filthy pollution of the sanctuaries, in order to extract from it the immaterial lesson, the foretaste of the pure and infinite joys of the Initiation. And this visit—I was going to say this exploration—we shall no longer make in the magnificent and corrupt Benares of the ghats, but in

native Kashi, that mysterious and inviolate quarter of the fakirs, the thaumaturgists and other workers of miracles. Thither I shall try to lead and to guide you. But shall I ever be able to describe the indescribable?

I understand how some might object that in my passionate admiration, my adoration for India, I may have been a victim of auto-suggestion or have deceived myself with appearances, or have worked up my enthusiasms from what I had already heard and read in Europe. But none of that would be true. I have only been the objective observer of a calm, regular and serene piety, an august contempt for death, a lofty indifference for all that must return to the earth. Little do I care if the Hindu believers venerate in their temples of marble and gold, holy cows or impudent, thieving monkeys, or that the foot of the devotee is scandalized if it slips on the sacred excretions! I remember only this: for these faithful *life is transitory*. That is what I conclude from their mournful, resigned, passive, vegetarian existence, perennially respectful of animal life, convinced abolitionists of desire (at times even of sensation), splendidly impassible before the funeral pyre which consumes the beloved being: father, mother, husband, child, brother, sister, betrothed, friend. This is what I

see in the hieratical attitude of their priests, what I read in the rolling eyeballs of their contemplative Rishis, their preaching Swamis, and their holy Yogis.

Ah! what fine faces they have, inspired, Galilean, these pundits deciphering some old text of the Upanishads, in the half-light of some votive altar! And what a mystic aura, wild, haggard, unearthly, seems to flit through the blinking eyes of these Sanyashis, anæmic and wasted by fastings, the face, beard and hair soiled with ashes and dried cow's dung, the neck and arms weighed down with shells and strings of pods, who stare at you with their ecstatic or possessed look and send a cold shiver of interrogation, doubt and terror over your whole body!

Often they are sincere. There are charlatans, too, sometimes. But if we are speaking of actors, are they not to be found in all the religious confessions? Mountebanks and money-changers of the temple, whom Jesus drove out with blows of the lash! It is inevitable that now and then Humanity should resume the rights of its unavoidable weakness, nothing here below being absolute or perfect. Nor does one need any profound learning to be able to put their right estimate on sleight-of-hand tricks, on the so-called phenomena of the

instantaneous germination of plants, the spontaneous bursting into flame or extinction of lighted coals, the disappearance of objects and other feats of juggling. To the learned Robert Houdins the local color adds an exotic atmosphere of mystery. Others, also jugglers—with us they would call themselves "hypnotists" and would provide themselves with fancy diplomas and the sufficiently cheap title of "professor"—others, I say, exercise and prodigiously fortify their will in order to amuse themselves at the expense of the simple and "easy" European. The hypnotic power has all the more force when it is exercised upon a brain oftenest encumbered with mean preoccupations, of the earth earthy, little fitted for a single and obstinate effort of the will. The strong fluid overmasters the weak fluid; between the operator and the subject, it is merely a matter of a few curious passes of suggestion. In short, just what people study every day at the Salpêtrière. But instead of calling itself *electrobiology,* and having as its founders illustrious neurologists like Charcot, Azam and Broca, in India it bears the name of fakirism and is practised by poor shivering wretches who, for a few pennies, will toss a rope into the air, "climb up the ladder" for you, in the exact and figurative meaning of the words. That

is probably what happened to me when I was with the princes of Jeypore and believed I saw a fakir juggle himself away and then bring an adder to life. With me, it must have been a case of partial hypnotism.

One of the most interesting classes of fakirs I encountered in India was undoubtedly that of the psychometrists,[1] or diviners. These prophets of the present, the past and the future reveal things with surprising exactitude, by merely touching some familiar object which you wear continually and which you are willing to confide to them for a moment. The object may have belonged to a dead member of your family, to one of your friends, or it may have been the property of a living person. The one essential is that it shall have been in *permanent* contact with the wearer. Thus it may be a watch, a pencil, a penknife, or a jewel. The object is handed to the diviner without a word being spoken. He grasps it tightly between his hands and strives to impregnate himself with the astral particles that cling to it or, more exactly, are crystallized upon it. After a few moments, the fakir sinks into a trance; his eyes turn inwards;

[1] See my romance *Pârvati*, pp. 155-158 (Albin Michel, publisher, Paris), and its English version by Mrs. Helen Davenport Gibbons (The Century Co.).

the sweat gathers in beads on his forehead, his hands and arms jerk and twist convulsively. . . . Then suddenly inarticulate words escape from his lips, at first merely confused phrases, which speedily join themselves together so as to form a complete and intelligible whole, an amazing and circumstantial résumé of the life or the temperament of the object's possessor. It has been my own experience—and all travelers worthy of credence who have had the experience will confirm my words—that nine times out of ten the utterances of these magicians have been astoundingly correct. In India, the power of the psychometrists is never disputed, either by popular belief among the natives or scientifically in the most cultivated British circles.

Let us pass to another variety of fakir, adroit fellows, with an eye for business, who speculate upon the disgust and pity of foreigners and make use of it to earn their living. These are the voluntary martyrs, the contortionists, who will exhibit before you a member that has been frightfully dislocated for years and has the color of mortification. That fellow began to mortify an arm fifteen years ago and has succeeded in doing so by holding it constantly stretched heavenward: the joints have grown together, making any movement henceforth

impossible, the muscles have become mummified; the nails of the hand have grown inordinately and have twisted themselves like vines about the wrists. This one passes his life surrounded by live coals, half suffocated by the smoke, or lying on a bed of nettles, cactus points or sharp bits of iron.

We must not forget those who are buried alive!

These last offer a rare example of courage and education of the will. The experience which they undergo voluntarily is worthy of being described, for it necessitates a training and above all a final resignation, to which, speaking personally, it would give me but little pleasure to force myself. For days, weeks and months, the fakir in question accustoms himself to eat, drink and breathe as little as possible. As we can easily imagine, the practice of breathing as little as possible is the most painful of these preliminary tests. In short, the candidate for provisional death tries to reach the point of suspended life, and to enter almost wholly into that animal petrifaction—if I may call it so—of the toad, the lizard and the tortoise.

When the proper day arrives, the initiate stretches himself out, or, more exactly, is stretched out in a coffin. Brahmans seal his eyes, nose, mouth and ears in turn with plugs of cotton wadding and with wax. They anoint his body with

special aromatic oils, which I suppose are also antiseptic and preservative. They murmur magic formulas and incantations over him, and in the presence of a great assembly of people and licensed witnesses—for in this country an event of such importance constitutes a sort of "first night"—the coffin lid is closed, screwed down and sealed over the living dead man, swathed in cloths and bandages. About the grave, which is covered with earth and over which they have sown some sort of grain, stand trusted guards, sometimes Sepoys from the Imperial Army, who keep watch day and night during the weeks or months, according to the period fixed by the voluntary deceased.

Then, when the time has passed, the coffin is taken out of the tomb and opened before the priests and the sworn witnesses. They verify the seals under the eye of the native magistrate, and the priests utter new prayers while the funeral Brahmans accomplish slowly and with infinite precaution the work of resurrection. They massage the extremities progressively, unstop the orifices sealed with cotton and wax, breathe air in, apply a gentle friction, exercise the extensor and respiratory muscles and finally pull the tongue rhythmically. When the double function of respiration and circulation has been established, they give a few drops

of some mysterious beverage to the resuscitated Lazarus, taking great care, naturally, to keep all food away from him. In the same way that he has been prepared by stages for the apparent death, he must accustom himself, by minutely regulated steps, to his quasi-miraculous raising from the dead. Too great haste in the renewing of his organs, suspended by lethargy, would inevitably cause his death—a real and effective death, this time.

To sum up this matter: many who have been interred alive, badly prepared, badly buried, or badly resuscitated, succumb to the trying experience. A small number of these amateur lovers of the grave survive this motionless and dangerous sport.

"Ab uno, disce omnes."

But let us continue our brief review of the principal and most curious voluntary martyrs.

There are other fakirs who take it as a duty or as an amusement to make the tour of the peninsula with the soles of their feet covered with tacks, or by crawling on their stomachs, using only the movements of their abdomen and chest. Others absorb themselves in the contemplation of a plant or a vine, the growth of which they have watched for twenty years! All their power of attention is

concentrated solely on the growth and development of a vegetable, the object of their observation. Unfortunately, close to these tortured creatures, these contemplators and do-nothings, is the wooden bowl, the inevitable wooden bowl, the crucible in which a lucrative business boils up in coppers!

In this connection, let me recount an anecdote that reveals, oh, how well! the nonchalance and the passivity of this fatalistic race.

I was visiting Buddha-Gaia, northern India's famous place of pilgrimage, a short distance from Benares, and my curiosity, my appetite for fakirism had just been aroused by the sight of an extremely corpulent old man, seated under a fig-tree, at a short distance from the great temple with its massive sculptures. Near this worthy were heaped up jars of rice, fruits and vegetables. A great crowd of idlers surrounded him, respectfully, without daring to address a word to him, contenting themselves with merely touching his rags and laying their offerings at his feet.

Without doubt, I was in the presence of a celebrated and venerated fakir. But what was he doing? What mysterious and secret vow was he obeying? And no bowl beside him? It was too much!

A PALACE ON THE BANKS OF THE GANGES

BRAHMANIC FUNERALS ON THE BANKS OF THE GANGES; TO THE LEFT, A CORPSE IN ITS SHROUD

BENARES—THE PILGRIMS' ABLUTIONS

BENARES—A HIGH-CASTE CREMATION

Full of curiosity, I approached the group and questioned my guide-interpreter.

"It is a holy man, Sahib," he answered feelingly.

"Good heavens! I can see that! But what is his specialty as a fakir?"

"Nothing, Sahib," answered my boy. "He is awaiting his Nirvana."

"What, already?"

"He is a great saint. He has sworn not to work or to beg, but to let himself die of hunger, if such is the will of Sivâ."

"But . . . that well-fed air, those plump cheeks. . . . And then those heaped up provisions? That rice, those fruits and vegetables? It seems to me that his vow . . ."

My boy jumped with indignation: "Oh, Sahib, could you think it! But the holy man has not *asked* for these provisions. They are offered to him. Therefore he accepts them. Surely all these good things ought to be eaten!"

And when, skeptical and amused, I shrugged my shoulders, my turbaned guide continued emphatically: "He is not a beggar, Sahib. But what can you expect? He dares not disobey Sivâ! I assure you that in his heart it costs him a good deal to eat."

No commentary.

But you will say either that I am mistaken or that I am afraid of taking away, one by one, the last illusions of my readers in regard to this most interesting corporation of fakirs. Let us be fair. As I have just impartially painted it, without any preconceived ideas of one sort or another, without prejudices due to ignorance or a spirit of mockery, this corporation, which in itself almost forms one of the Indian castes, remains, whatever we may think of it, one of the peculiarities, one of the oddities, one of the attractions of this extraordinary country. The fakir, even when he is a charlatan, a trickster, or simply lazy, contributes his own quite special note. I will go further and say that he forms a part, an *integral part* of the picture, the atmosphere and the local color. This being so, we owe him a little of the indulgence, even a little of the favor and sympathy which we bestow so lavishly on certain heroes of our detective stories, gentleman-burglars and other delicious rascals who are never entirely repentent . . . and whom we always absolve!

CHAPTER XVIII

DAWN ON THE HIMALAYA

Calcutta-London—Chandernagor unadorned—The crossing of Father Ganges—Darjeeling and its Thibetian bonzes—Sunrise over the Gaorisankar—A dispossessed rajah—The throne-punishment of the hermit—How one becomes Parahamsa.

OF Calcutta I shall say little, having received few impressions from it. It is a modern city, rather like London, whose docks, black with smoke, strangely resemble those of the Thames (and yet this great river which flows past is the Howgli, an arm of the Ganges!). In the same way the big bridge which unites the ancient capital to its suburb of Howrah, bears a strong resemblance to the famous London Bridge, in its turbulence, its press of vehicles and the affluence of the pedestrians; only here the cab-horses are zebus, fastened to little carts, and the thronging passers-by belong to all the shades of the Hindu rainbow: Parsees, Bengalis, Pathans, Ba-

luches, Afghans, Burmese, Sikhs, Goorkhas, even a few Thibetians, Nepalese and Chinese.

The day before I had visited Chandernagor.

Poor Chandernagor! What illusions are dispelled at the sight of this little town lost under the exuberant foliage of the palms, the dear palms found again at last! What a downfall since 1673, the date of its foundation by our *Compagnie des Indes!* . . . Today, these two thousand or so brick houses, ill at ease in their narrow, restricted enclosure, owe their existence to the friendly generosity of the English. A simple cordon of customs officials would suffice to starve out this settlement and strangle in a few days its miserable little trade. It is useless to look for colonists; as at Yanaon, Karikal and Mahé the French population is confined to the Administrator, the police corporal, the tax-collector, the missionaries and the good Sisters. The manager of the single hotel at Chandernagor (what an hotel!) was, at the time of my stay, an Austrian from Trieste. There is, indeed, a Dupleix College, but we teach English in it —French being treated as *optional!* On the other hand, and this is a small crumb of consolation, Chandernagor is the prey, at least as much as Pondichéry, of the worst politics and the worst journalism. The elections there are a veritable

traffic in dishonest influences in the two opposed camps. Finally, to complete this sad but strictly true picture, I recall that it was at Chandernagor that the revolutionary Bengali bomb-throwers were accustomed to hold their meetings. It even used to be one of the haunts of Shwadeshism, the Indian nihilism. They tell me, but I have no other proof of it, that the anarchist paper "Yukantar," the organ of this party, was set up and printed in our possession, under the protection of our flag, and that not long ago it offered a reward for the head of any European. Sweet land! Such is the gratitude of a population to which England pays annually a fee of three hundred balls of opium on the condition that it does not cultivate this product itself!

I try to forget these humiliating memories on the forward deck of the ferry-boat from Calcutta to Damukdia-Ghât, while I watch the boatman cast out his sounding-line, chanting each time, in a minor key, the depth of the waters of Father Ganges. This precaution, if I am to believe the keeper of the Parsee buffet, has become absolutely indispensable to the safety of navigation in these parts; in fact, no possible sounding could map out a *permanent* river-bed; the river here displays the peculiarity of changing the banks along its sides

nearly every day. A great silence broods over this immense and dreary waste, edged with mists, through which shows, from time to time, the half-spectral apparition of a fisherman, hauling in his nets in his phantom bark. The crossing, which quite stirs one's emotions, takes about three-quarters of an hour, after which one changes to the Eastern-Bengal Railway, the track of which is only a meter wide. From there one reaches Siliguri, a station situated at the foot of the first spurs of the Himalaya, four hundred feet above the level of the sea.

Siliguri is the point of departure for the Lilliputian train which terminates at Darjeeling. This line is only sixty centimeters wide, which gives its trains the aspect and the charm of a set of toy cars. Nevertheless, it carries a heavy traffic, and its engines can pull as much as fifty tons, and that on grades which sometimes rise one foot in forty-five. The slow ascent assumes a character of grandiose beauty, wild and austere: two locomotives, one in front and one behind, climb the steep slope, beyond which rise the immaculate peaks of the Kichijunga chain. Bold curves and dizzying zig-zags! We mount up through silent, virgin forests, alternating along the slopes of the mountains with little bare mounds from which gushing fountains and

cascades spread out in sparkling drops over the moss and lichens. Then the first tea-plantations of Kurseong stretch their carefully spaced bushes over the uplands. I am already struck by the change in the type of the inhabitants: no more of those handsome profiles, with straight noses, oval chins, large black eyes, but a complete and ethnical transformation in the Mongol faces of these short, thickset mountaineers, of a bilious complexion, with undeniably almond-shaped lids, with large smiling mouths which no longer have that bitter, disillusioned, melancholy look, that racial lassitude which I have so continually noticed in most Indians, Aryans as well as Dravidians.

Darjeeling!

I allow myself to be carried off to the hotel, in spite of the bumps and jolts of my primitive rickshaw which is dragged along by feminine arms—for in this anything but commonplace country the woman does the work of the man, who is piously occupied in smoking, gossiping, meditating or ceaselessly turning his prayer-wheel. Yes, so great is masculine laziness in these Himalaya that the poorest family counts among its everyday domestic utensils this precious instrument of piety, in the interior of which the Buddhist bonzes have written miles of prayers. When these litanies are once

wound up, the devout man has nothing to do but to turn his *"cri-cri": the prayer says itself all alone.*

* * * * * *

I arose this morning at four o'clock. A meritorious effort, but it is not every morning that we can watch the sun rise over one of the highest summits on our planet.

A dense fog floats over everything as my furry pony, preceded by a guide bearing lanterns, sets out over the road which leads to Tiger Point. From there I hope to see the setting of the first star on the summit of Gaorisankar, called Mount Everest by the English.

First, there is a sharp ascent, abrupt and fatiguing, by a zig-zag path across which my mount's shoe sets stones rolling every moment. My eyes, beginning to grow accustomed to the darkness, soon make out in the distance a sort of rustic chalet, built on a platform and dominating on one side the unlimited plain, the basin of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, on the other the four or five successive levels of the mountains which rise, step after step, up to the gigantic white chain.

I feel isolated, lost on this platform, in this sea of morning mists, which the timid light of dawn is piercing little by little. First, there is a diffused

NANGA-BABA, THE ASCETIC, IN HIS WATCH-TOWER, TURNING HIS BACK TO THE GANGES

A FANATIC OF THE SECT OF SIVA, PROCEEDING ON A PILGRIMAGE BY ROLLING

DARJEELING (HIMALAYA)—A THIBETAN BONZE AND HIS FAMILY

CAWNPORE—MEMORIAL OF THE MASSACRE IN 1857

silver light, which bars the horizon with a parallel band, the two extremities of which grow gradually less. This band of light sets glittering confusedly the meanderings of the rivers, streams, torrents and the motionless basins of the ponds, revealing geographically the vast network of arteries and big and little veins that feed the body of the peninsula of Hindustan. A loose mass of black clouds stands out fantastically against the luminous ray, which now slowly loses its paleness, turning to straw yellow, to amber and to orange. All at once the sun bursts through; the dark curtain is torn open and a lake of fire appears. How can I translate in words this Dantesque vision, so sinister and so terrifying? It seems to me that those black ravelings have become the damned, dancing their infernal, hideous and eternal round. It is beautiful, tragically beautiful, horribly beautiful. And yonder, the cone grows rosy, little by little, colored by that lake which has become an ocean. Now a purple sea extends before me, a blood-covered expanse on which the damned melt away, shade off and vanish. One would say that, in his supreme forbearance, God was opposing himself to the eternal torture of the condemned throughout the centuries. An era of pity, perhaps of pardon and forgetfulness, opening with this red-gold apotheosis

in which the sublime Redeemer sinks once more. But then what are we to think of the implacable vengeance of which the Scriptures speak?

This haunting doubt pursues me into the sunken gorge which I now enter on the way to the hidden retreat of a hermit, a Parahamsa, one of those unknown sages who have taken refuge in the inaccessible solitudes of the Himalaya. I had been told at Benares of this ascetic. His history has something of the symbolic about it. An ancient dispossessed rajah, he now leads in a bamboo hut the life of a contemplative philosopher, detached from all earthly desires.

As with my guide I enter the hermit's enclosure, an unexpected sight nails me, so to speak, to the threshold. Before me, in the middle of a court, on a heap of vegetable rubbish where fowls are pecking, a motionless, smooth-skinned old man is seated on a throne of teak-wood, gilded, sculptured, carved by marvelous unknown artists. It strikes me that this shining seat must formerly have been encrusted with gems, to judge from the gaping settings from which stones have been brutally torn. I stop, uncertain, troubled and out of countenance before this man, in the pose of a Buddha, whom I have just disturbed from his meditation on Nirvana. My letter of introduction from Ben-

ares trembles in my hand; I am in half a mind to take myself off. How is that dreamer there going to receive me? Has he even seen me?

Apparently not; but without looking at me he motions me to approach. The interview begins at once through the translations of my interpreter. The hermit's voice is a little dull, broken by age, but still soft and harmonious. I learn about his manner of life, his vow and why, by a hermitical refinement worthy both of Saint Benedict and Simon Stylites, he voluntarily surrounds his ancient throne with manure and offal, which he is obliged to cross each time he comes to sit there. A punishment for his past life of debauchery and tyranny? Or the symbol of the compromise, the baseness and villainy which generally constitute the approach to power and its preservation? Just which, I have difficulty in making out from my guide's jargon. The hermit has taken my letter of introduction and looked it over, without speaking, with his dead eyes, already filled with the Beyond and clouded with ecstasy.

Then, regretfully shaking off his hypnosis, he says to me: "So there are those among the feringhis of the West who wish to instruct themselves in our doctrine?"

I reply to the Parahamsa that in Europe there

are numerous disciples of Vivekananda, of Annie Besant, and that Paris, as well as London and Madras, has its theosophical lodge; I speak to him of the *Blue Lotus* of Madame Blavatsky. All this is not unknown to him. These names and these associations are not unfamiliar to him, thanks to his reading and his reflections in former times when he used to reign, when he commanded a people, courtiers, armies. Today these recollections are only an echo in his weakened memory. And he rejoices in his own downfall:

"Thou seest here, O stranger, a man who, despoiled of his kingdom and his riches, glories in this supreme joy, the only true one which this incarnation has afforded him. As a king I learned to know men; they are all falsehood, deceit and treachery. I myself who speak to thee, I have been, I still am, the vilest among them. I wished to enslave my subjects. The oppressor has punished me for it. I have seen my wives and sons murdered, my palace burned, my treasures confiscated, my titles abolished. But why should I complain against this just punishment of my sins? . . . I am conscious of a former state in which I was even baser and more miserable. The progression announced by the master is therefore on the way to realization. The Gautama has said it:

'Nothing that is to happen will happen before its appointed hour.' It is the sage's part to be patient and to await his next and more perfect evolution. Why should the ambitious and stupid man desire obstinately to hasten this change, scorning the usual term?"

I look at this strange old man. He frightens me a little with that calm air of his, like a living idol. And as I bid him farewell, bowing respectfully, as before one of the highest personages whom I have encountered in this country, I hear him murmuring softly the ritualistic invocation of the pilgrims to the Ganges: *"Om Brahmâ kripaï kevolom,"* "O Brahma, may thy will alone be done!"

In this fashion, the Grand Lama of the Thibetans must pray at Lhassa.

PART IV

CHAPTER XIX

HYDERABAD AND GOLCONDA

Albert Besnard and *L'Homme en Rose*—First annoyances—An indiscreet nurse—Strolling near the Char-Minar—His Highness, the Nizam, has me arrested—The incident closed—A nightingale worth 7,000 rupees—The ruins of Golconda—Yesterday and Today.

YDERABAD is the land of the Thousand and One Nights!

All my impressions can be summed up in this one exclamation of admiration. No city in India, unless it is Jeypore, possesses so much Asiatic splendor and local color; and I understand why my illustrious friend Albert Besnard has stayed here so long. Was it not here, for that matter, that we met? Captivated, both of us, by the fabulous and legendary side of this city, we have drawn from it our own respective observations. He, the marvelous artist, has caught on his pallet, and also in that living book of his, so full of color, *L'Homme en Rose,* the highly Oriental strange-

ness of "this field of gaily-colored turbans." I, in my more modest sphere of writer, have been content to jot down in my traveler's note-book the coming and going of this multi-colored crowd, the extraordinary procession of these princes, these *imans,* these fakirs, the sing-song supplications of these beggars, the sly winking of these bearded merchants, squatting at the back of their shops, like hairy spiders in search of prey. How much personality has this tradition-loving people, so far removed from our Europe! What atmosphere! I am positively impregnated with it, gripped by it, denationalized.

A Dutch Catholic missionary, whose acquaintance I make in the train, between the stations of Raïchur and Wadi, warns me of the astonishment I shall feel on entering the States of the Nizam, as they call the sovereign of the Dekkan who reigns over twelve millions of subjects, most of them Mohammedans. This virtual unanimity of religious belief, according to the reverend father, does not prevent the authorities from showing an extremely liberal attitude towards the Christians and the Hindus. To support his statement, the good missionary shows me in his portfolio a special permit from the sultan's high police, dispensing him from all administrative annoyance, and at the same time

a permanent free pass to travel first class on all the railways of that region. "The English," he adds in this connection, "also prove by this that on their side they honor and favor, without distinction, all the sowers of the good word and propagandists of civilization." It is unnecessary to add that they are repaid for it. I shall always remember the enthusiastic way in which the Dutch priest extolled to me the benefits of the English occupation of Central India, and especially how he praised the English canal of Bezwada, to which all the surrounding plains owe their present fertility.

I reach Hyderabad at about seven in the evening. Why am I not a missionary! A caviling, indiscreet, inquisitorial policeman questions me as I leave the train: "Where do you come from? Who are you? What are you doing? Where are you going? Why are you traveling? Is it on business or for pleasure?" All this respectfully, of course, but with such persistency as to make one's hair rise. They make me pass a second sanitary examination at the station; they change my first plague-passport for another, more detailed, if such a thing is possible. And yet I come from Bangalore, an exceptionally healthy city! I shake with indignation, I protest, I call down the avenging thunders of my consul. All my French trepi-

dation brings only one result, an amused smile on the lips of my obsequious questioners. For a crowning insult, they tell me that I must go day after tomorrow to the Civil Hospital and have myself examined by a *nurse* appointed for this duty. . . . If I decide to remain at Hyderabad for ten days, I shall have the advantage of being examined only every other day. What luck for me!

Ouf! I have just been before this new-fashioned examining board. The nurse, a half-breed blackamoor, has contented herself with examining my face, hands, arms and chest, fortunately not going further. And now, my baggage installed at the Secunderabad Hotel, I relax my mind by making a little trip through the town, accompanied by my boy. I adore these aimless strolls about the little streets and bazaars; I have generally observed that this is the best way to glean observations of all sorts. We therefore set off on foot, without the least ostentation, across the bridge of the river Musi, which one might walk over, the drought has so dried it up. Then we pass through the wall of forts built in 1555 by the king of Golconda, Mohammed Kuli. Along the river bank they have built levees and permanent barricades because of the frequent inundations. Do not laugh

A STREET IN HYDERABAD

RUINS AT GOLCONDA

H. H. PRINCE AGA-KHAN, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL HEAD OF THE MUSSULMANS OF INDIA

at the paradox! They are still speaking of the ravages of the last flood of 1908.

We make our way toward the Char-Minar, a majestic building of white rough-stone, flanked by four minarets. They still call it the Fish's Gate, undoubtedly because a gigantic wooden carp, wrapped in red muslin, swings there. At its entrance are lines of blind men, each led by a sharp-eyed child, who with indistinct, voluble voices, chant their complaint like an anthem to the crowd. Turbaned horsemen, mounted on frisky little long-tailed horses, pass and repass along the highway. I am struck by the appearance of these horsemen, some of them armed with Arab guns, others with *yatagans* and *kandjars,* a perquisite which, as with our Corsicans, has been granted them from time immemorial. I follow the highway mechanically, interested in all that surrounds me. The further I advance, the more congested becomes the traffic. My boy explains that today happens to be a great Mohammedan festival and that the people are coming to render homage to His Highness, the Nizam. We advance with great difficulty, and soon we are under the very windows of the zenana where, from behind the dirty screens of yellow grass, the monarch's hundreds of wives are motionlessly watching the ebb and flow of the crowd.

A remark here. I am always infinitely respectful of the customs and religious ceremonies of the countries I visit, modeling myself in this on the English, who are thoroughly tolerant rulers. But truly I did not think I was committing a sacrilege in mingling innocently with the prince's subjects. Just then, however, my glance fell on the balcony where the sultan stood. Was it because, untidily dressed as he was, badly shaved, with his hair in disorder and his black garments covered with spots, the Nizam, who was surrounded by his little Crown Prince, four years old, and two half-breed nurses, was ashamed to be surprised in such a state by a European? Or was he suddenly seized with an irrational hatred of foreigners? However that may be, this potentate—one of the most powerful, and above all one of the richest in India, possessing an income of no less than seventy-five millions—made me a sign with his hand to retire. Very much astonished, I did not comply with his command but contented myself with saluting him respectfully. He then repeated his gesture with more impatience and irritation, this time covering his head with his *dastar,* a miter of yellow silk somewhat recalling the bonnet of the Venetian doge. At this moment I felt myself violently seized by policemen armed to the teeth, who

hustled and dragged me off in spite of my protestations. In vain did I allege my good faith, my pacific intentions; in vain did I produce from my pocket-book the vice-regal recommendation which had been delivered to me in Calcutta. It was of no use and, moreover, the fanatical crowd swarmed around me and threatened to do me harm. Then my boy exhorted me to prudence in this independent State where the English control is insufficiently exercised; and I retraced my steps, outraged at this uncivil and summary incident.

The next day, of course, I complained vehemently before the British Commissioner of the discourteous treatment to which, without the least appearance of provocation on my part, I had been subjected. Everything leads me to believe that the Resident's rebuke had a good effect, for two hours later an aide-de-camp of His Highness came to explain to me in ludicrous terms that there had been a misunderstanding on my part, that his Master, in inviting me to withdraw, had had only the idea of preserving me from jostling or eventual ill-treatment by his subjects. His Highness, he assured me, deeply regretted the incident. He offered me his carriages, his automobiles and even one of his chamberlains as a guide to palliate the first bad impression. I received these excuses

coldly and declined the offers of the intermediary, adding that as a guest who had been magnificently received by the Maharajahs of Kapurthala, Jeypore, Gwalior, Cooch-Behar, etc., I could expect nothing more from the princely hospitality of India. I have never known—or cared, for that matter—whether or not this little well-merited lesson bore its fruit.

In regard to this same potentate, here is a typical anecdote which I shall give in its entirety.

One day when he was walking in the streets, without ceremony, with his little son, the Crown Prince, he noticed a small boy who held on his fist, as is the fashion in Hyderabad, a red-tailed nightingale, fastened by a string to his foot. On hearing the impassioned trills of the bird virtuoso, the royal child was deeply stirred.

"I wish I could have it!" he murmured in ecstasy, his hands clasped.

"Very well," said the Nizam. And, addressing one of his officers, "Go," he said, "buy me that nightingale for 700 rupees."

"Seven hundred rupees!" exclaimed the courtier. "But Your Highness can get it without difficulty for 700 annas!"

"Ah, is that so!" returned the sovereign, frown-

ing. "Indeed! But *this time* I wish to pay 7,000 rupees. Go, bring me the bird and a receipt."

Ostentatious, omnipotent, capricious—and barbaric, a good many of them are still like that!

For the rest, as this man has died since my trip through his States, peace to his ashes!

The next day is the great Mohammedan feast of Moharram: three hundred elephants, a hundred and twenty camels, caparisoned in scarlet, more than a thousand horses and mules, their brows covered with masks that give their noses the appearance of beaks, pass in a procession under the Char-Minar and along the great arteries of the city. A regular army which I estimate at approximately thirty thousand men files past the palace of the sultan, preceded by its standards and music; mercenary battalions of Arab infantry from Hedjaz follow it. The guns thunder, the rifles crack, the people shout. Standing up on the coachman's seat in my carriage, so that I may look down on the yelling, stamping crowd, I take many snapshots. Oh! the harmonious and intensely Oriental mixture of all these colored stuffs, agitated by a pious delirium! And what a variety of shades in these turbans and head-dresses that range from purple to crimson and amaranth, from lilac to dark violet, from ocher to sulphur and saffron, from

green-blue to olive-green, from beige to sepia and chestnut, from royal blue to dull turquoise! . . . "Out of the way!" the *sais*-runners cry, shaking their fly-chasers before a closed coach. Through the gaping shutters, I distinguish a white cloak falling over a *sari* of salmon brocade. It is a woman, a woman of the nobility, a princess no doubt. My coachman pulls his horses to one side: "Prime Minister's lady, Sir!" He has recognized the livery. The carriage passes and I breathe for a moment the faint perfume of amber and benjamin. Was she beautiful perhaps? Ah! who can express the tormenting secrecy of these veils! And the enigmatic smile which hides behind them! And the harmonious flight of these draperies, many-colored or even uniformly white, which mold, perhaps, the body of an antique goddess, the finely arched form of a pre-Homeric virgin!

This mirage of Asia is still in my eyes two days later when I let my dreamy glance wander over what remains today of enchanting Golconda. This mirage peoples with life, in my eyes, the streets, palaces, mosques, harems, baths and bazaars of the City of Diamonds, which has now become the City of Silence.

Before arriving at the august ruins, I have skirted, in company with a student, the steep bank

of a fish-pond which bears the pretty name of Mir-Allam. Here of old the royal wives and courtesans came to go sailing on a galley with sails of stretched silk; no indiscreet glance could reach these sumptuous captives. Only the thin, nasal song of the eunuchs scanned, to the sound of the *vina,* the sister of our guitar, the cadenced breathing of the rowers. A twilight of dream has fallen over weary Golconda, whose interminable, crenelated encircling walls seemed to serve as a support to the galloping hordes of nocturnal clouds, amid which the first stars were beginning to shine.

Before me stretches the gray, dusty road, kept in order here and there by a gang of women of the district. And soon here I am before the gates of the first circular rampart which once measured seventeen kilometers. They are covered with iron, these gates, and also studded with sharp points, to prevent the war elephants from shaking them with blows of their tusks or from rubbing their backs against them for sport. The Nizam, I am assured, provides for their upkeep, as well as for the repairs to the second, enclosing wall, within which fabulous treasures may still be heaped up, pell-mell, in ingenious and unknown hiding-places. In the court separating this first wall from the second there are heaps of stone and cast-iron cannon balls,

arms of all sorts and also machines for a siege that recall the *ballistæ,* the battering-rams and the catapults of heroic Troy. There are endless stairs and steps, a second iron-covered door, at a turning, then an inclined plane by which I reach Golconda proper.

What devastation! Aurengzeb the Mogul has passed here. . . . There is no harmony of bright colors to spread their warmth over this sad grayness. It would fill a painter with consternation and ravish an architect. For these speaking ruins have preserved their ancient style, still uplifting their delicate profiles among the enormous blocks of gray granite, as irregular as those of the ruins of Apremont and Franchard. One's foot stumbles and slips over the débris: cracked cisterns, circular roads overgrown with brambles, crumbling underground vaults, gaping oubliettes, mosques tottering on their foundations. A high wind might knock it all down. Nothing is left of its grandeur and power but a memory, clinging to a few cracked and falling stones.

But how beautiful it is! Majestically and tragically beautiful! Beautiful as the loved face of a dead grandmother! The same serenity, the same self-communion, the same peace. . . .

THE MONKEYS OF MUTTRA

A SACRED ELEPHANT AT THE THRESHOLD OF A TEMPLE

TANJORE—THE GREAT PAGODA OF THE BLACK BULL

TANJORE—THE TEMPLE OF SOBRAMANYE

In the distance is the stir and noise of Hyderabad, all white, with its perpetual holiday air.

Yesterday—which is no more—feels mounting close to it the living Today.

CHAPTER XX

TO THE MEMORY OF DUPLEIX

Pondichéry and the Adrian Bonhoure project—A few words about the Tamil race—Remnants of the past—We go as far as Villianur—The dancing-girl trick—Madras, a mirage of Europe.

OF the magnificent heritage of Dupleix, Bussy, Mahé de la Bourdonnais and Lally-Tollendal, there remains to us today only a modest, a sort of honorific legacy the importance of which, economically speaking, is, except for Pondichéry, almost nil.

England, even if it is in a friendly fashion, hems in our settlements. Our scattered possessions, such as Yanaon, Karikal, Mahé, Chandernagor, the quarter in Dacca and other enclosed territories have no connection with one another. The territory of Pondichéry alone is held entirely or almost entirely under one control. One of our most distinguished colonial administrators, M. Adrian Bonhoure—who presided so happily over the de-

velopment of New Caledonia, then of Tahiti and its dependencies, finally of Djibouti, our flourishing Somali sea-coast—conceived in 1909, when he was Governor of French India, a vast and beautiful project the aim of which was the enlargement and unification of our domain of Pondichéry by means of the reconveyance to the English of our settlements of Chandernagor, Mahé, Karikal and Yanaon. It was an essentially practical plan, since it permitted the French colonial effort, instead of dissipating itself sterilely, to be directed efficaciously to a single outlet, benefiting at once by one port and one railway system. The enclosed territories, a perpetual cause of disagreement and litigation, would disappear. We should gain for our business a unity of plan and a celerity in realizing it. Our neighbors across the channel, after a few formalities, seemed well-disposed towards this friendly arrangement. It was from France that the obstruction came, from France where our unlucky and quite national ignorance of geographical and colonial questions prevented us from grasping the utilitarian import of such a transaction. The chauvinistic press was roused; it cried *haro* on those impious souls who proposed to sell Chandernagor at auction, alleging that this would be to attack the History of France, to profane the

memory of Dupleix, to disfigure his work . . . such were the headlines of the sensational front-page articles. At once a movement formed itself in favor of the *statu quo*. Parliament itself judged the suggestion inopportune, even questionable. And the affair was closed, to the great joy of certain functionaries and electors whom the reform would probably have injured. Therefore, M. Adrian Bonhoure, broken-hearted, had to put his plan away among his papers. Oh, heedless metropolitanism! Oh, centralization![1]

There are two ways of reaching Pondichéry, by sea, on board the *Messageries Maritimes,* from Colombo or Calcutta, by land, by taking the great English line which unites Tuticorin to Madras, changing at the branch station of Villupuram. It was by this latter method of transportation that I reached the capital of our French settlements in India. This territory of Pondichéry has belonged to us since 1872. The city was founded two years later by François Martin. Its area can be estimated at about 29,145 hectares, of which 2,004 are

[1] As this work is appearing, we have reason to believe that, on the enlightened initiative of M. Albert Sarraut, Deputy from Aude—who was twice the eminent Governor-General of our Indo-China and contributed so powerfully to its present prosperity—this Minister for the Colonies has resumed the study of this project, awaiting the opportunity to carry it out as after-the-war circumstances, colonial and diplomatic, may permit.

wooded, 9,707 uncultivated land, and the rest consists of rice and other plantations.

The principal resources are rice, indigo, copra, tapioca, earth-nuts, betel, poppies, etc. Several sorts of cotton cloth are manufactured there, and the most highly esteemed are dyed blue. I must mention in passing the great spinning mill at Savannah which employs more than 2,000 workers. As for a few details about the inhabitants: the Pondicherians are deeply bronzed and of the Dravidian race. The men, who are darker skinned than the Cingalese, are very scantily clad: on the head a sort of turban, about the loins a piece of white muslin. And that is all! I hasten to add that the women's costume is slightly less rudimentary: a little short vest confines their breasts, leaving bare the arms and the abdomen; a waist-cloth falls from the hips to the knees. Their walk is plastic and one cannot but admire the outline and the movement of their shoulders and their arms as they balance great vessels of shining copper on their heads. With one's eyes shut, in the middle of the night, in the darkest street, one would immediately know the Tamil woman simply by the clinking of her ornaments, her necklaces, bracelets and rings which, covering her from head to foot, make her sound like an Andalusian

mule. Like many other Indian women, she wears a little gold button ornamented with pearls screwed into the nostril, or, more often, a large ring of gold or silver wire at the partition of the nose. Widows, on the other hand, are entirely without trinkets and have their heads shaved.

From the station, which is in British territory and on which the name is written in the English style, Pondicherry—I make my way, in a four-wheeled rickshaw, to the Southern Quarter to pay my first homage as a newly arrived Frenchman to the statue of Dupleix. Our glorious compatriot, whose name ought to remain engraved imperishably on our hearts by the side of Montcalm's, is represented with his hand on the hilt of his sword, bare-headed, his eyes fixed on the waves that come to die on the strand. The pedestal and the eight rostral columns that surround it were brought from the now ruined temple of Gingi. I admire the fine sculptures, very Indian in manner and harmonious as a whole. Opposite, a boom serves as a landing-bridge; a double rail transports to it the merchandise brought by the *chelingues,* a sort of canoe with eight or ten rowers. A few steps from the statue, on a large square, rises a little pavilion or rather a fountain, and the palace of the governor, the flat roof and European pillars of

which, in the style of the Bourse or the Madeleine, are a little out of place in the midst of this exotic scenery. How greatly I prefer the cathedral of the foreign missions with its Jesuit or Rococo architecture, which clearly belongs to its own eighteenth century, and the little white provincial houses of the Rue Royale, the Rue Dupleix, the Rue St. Louis and the Rue Quay de la Ville Blanche!

I see them slipping past, one after another, those low dwellings, whitened with chalk, in the interiors of which one not infrequently perceives a Louis XV pier-glass or a parquet floor of lozenged oak. In this setting, a little affected and mannered, once danced perhaps the red-heeled gallants and the furbelowed marquises of whom that strange Jeanne de Castro, otherwise Madame Dupleix, was the vicereine. Today the occupants of those pretty little houses are only creoles who have emigrated from Mauritius or Bourbon Island when they are not, quite simply, half-breed Eurasians, and dirty at that. The days follow one another. . . .

I am thinking of all this, in a melancholy way, while two men push and one pulls me in a little Pondicherian vehicle towards the Pagoda of Villianur, situated a few miles distant in the French

enclosure. I use this word "enclosure" intentionally, for we had to make no less than five or six successive passages over territory that was alternately French and English in order to reach this temple. One can form some idea from this of the incessant difficulties that the respective neighboring proprietors of these frontier domains experience. Traveling at the rate of about two kilometers an hour, the two men pushing behind and the one who is pulling in front contrive to stream with sweat; their bronzed faces turn toward me at times and interrogate me with good-natured, lazy smiles. Is it really absolutely necessary that I should go as far as the pagoda? The truth is that, in my inmost heart, I feel somewhat shame-faced, lounging all by myself in this little four-wheeled cart, surmounted by a parasol; I look like an invalid in a merry mood. But how can I do otherwise? It is the only practicable method of locomotion in Pondichéry. (What a world of comfort and speed separates these grating, jolting armchairs on wheels from the flexible, delicious rickshaws, with their pneumatic tires, of Saigon!)

The first persons we pass on the road are a squad of French Sepoys, quite military in their bearing. Some of them, seeing me crammed into the corner of my little wagon, have a mocking smile in the

corner of their lips. What can you expect? They are voters like myself and from universal suffrage, especially in a colonial land, we can ask nothing but strict equality, however familiar and contemptuous. In the fields the peasants are busy with their *picoites,* by means of which they draw water from the wells—a sort of see-saw, like those which we observe every day in the outskirts of Cairo and which they set in motion by walking from one end to the other of the tilting beam. Finally, after having crossed or skirted a maze of canals shaded by palm-trees, as pleasing in their appearance as those I admired yesterday at Coudepacom, we reach the famous pagoda.

These six kilometers have seemed interminable to me; and my first care, on arriving at the village, over which floats our national flag, is to demand with hue and cry a cool, sparkling soda, lightly colored with whisky. My men, more sober, content themselves with cocoanut milk. An old Brahman then approaches me and in an evil Anglo-French jargon whispers to me some indistinct and mysterious sentences: "Yes, master, moi connaise belle danseuse . . . three rupees only . . . très attractif toi verras!"

I know this dancing-girl trick of his; it has al-

ready been played on me several times. It is a classic trick of the indigenous artful dodger who dresses his daughter up in tinsel, covers her with bells and sets her jigging before the blissful European. I leave this worthy discomfited and make my way to the sacred pond, on the bank of which I sit down. Before me there is a little pagoda surrounded by water, behind which are outlined in the background pyramidal *gopuras*. It is all, I must confess, very like what I have already seen elsewhere, but a chauvinistic pride seizes me because this temple is *ours,* the last vestige of our dominion in this country which is so firmly attached to the Brahmanistic dogmas. Besides, this little pagoda of Villianur is one of the prettiest things, architecturally speaking, in which our French eyes can take pride. I have not found its equal either in Mahé or in Chandernagor. On this score alone did I not owe it the honor of a visit?

I return to my rickshaw and find the old impresario there chanting his couplet to me again: "Yes, master, toi jamais vue si beautiful bayadère . . . moi y en a, faire danser lotus, cobra, peacock."

I fling him a handful of annas, for the probable cost of the disguise, and I hear him murmuring to

my astonished boy, "That's a Parisian. . . . I know!"

And now, since this morning and for a few hours, here I am at Madras. Madras—that is to say, a sudden return to the things of Europe which —with no offense to lovers of local color—also have their good side. Who, in fact, can describe the Edenlike charm of a good bath in a bath-tub after the too truly tublike tub of India! And the delight of a drive in a real carriage along a clean, level highway, without bumps or ruts! And the sybaritic consumption in the "tea-room" of well-buttered toast and muffins!

Is not Madras, after Calcutta and Bombay, the largest city of British India? As the capital of the presidency of the same name and the residence of the governor, it has never ceased to be the seat of the government and of a Court of Appeals and numbers today nearly half a million inhabitants. Its surface is so spread out that every cottage has its little garden, and many vast dwellings and palaces are surrounded by a park. This privileged situation (which reminds me somewhat of Weltevreden, the elegant quarter of Batavia) permits everyone, without leaving his home and in the very center of the city, to imagine himself in the

country and to have all its pleasures. Quick! before dinner at the "D'Angelis," a short ride in a victoria about the city! Am I in India? Imposing modern monuments follow one another like stepping-stones along the beach on a strip of earth twenty kilometers by twelve in length: the College, the High Court of Justice, which is crowned by the lighthouse, the Museum of Art and Commerce. Other buildings, like the Shepauk Building, the former residence of the nawabs of the Carnatic, are visibly inspired by the Doric, Ionic, and Saracen orders and, like the Theosophical Lodge and the School of Arts, also attract my attention. One must not fail to visit this School of Arts, for in it one can see the natives revealing all their aptitude for ceramics, engraving on metals, beaten copper work, sculpture, painting, enameling, etc. . . . Afterwards I go to Fort St. George, where one finds the first English church built in India (1678-1680), not far from the black city and the bazaars, then to the People's Park and the Botanical Gardens, where splendid tigers are roaring. And, without my giving him any order, as if mechanically, the irreproachable driver of my comfortable victoria takes me along the boulevard of the Ramina Road, on which the British and Tamil elegance of Madras is accustomed to gather

MADURA—THE PALACE OF THE ANCIENT RAJAH WHO WAS DISPOSSESSED

THE SACRED ROCK OF TRICHINOPOLY

MONGOLIAN AND ARYAN TYPES

A SANYASKI FAKIR ON A JOURNEY (IN THE CENTER)

each evening to enjoy the cool of the day and the music while they consume ices and sherbets.

This Marina Road, why, it's the Promenade des Anglais at Nice, it's the jetty at Ostend!

I pinch my elbow to see if I am really awake! . . .

CHAPTER XXI

THE TEMPLES OF COROMANDEL

Tanjore and its bull of black marble—The jewel of Sobramanyé—Bad taste of native royalty—The sacred rock of Trichinopoly—Sri-Ragham and its 20,000 Brahmans.

ON leaving Madras to go to Tanjore and then to Trichinopoly, the city of the monolith, one is struck by the exuberance of the tropical vegetation. Everywhere are clumps of cabbage palms, cocoanut trees, bananas, cut here and there by masses of violet bougainvilliers and purple hibiscus. All this verdure sways and undulates above immense green rice-fields. A smiling, enchanting country, if there ever was one!

Several architects, English as well as French, who had journeyed to India before me, had especially recommended to my attention the Temple of Tanjore as offering, with those of Madura and Sri-Ragham, the most perfect examples of the Dravidian style. "That of Tanjore, above all,"

they told me, "has the merit of not too greatly shocking our European æsthetic conceptions. It cannot fail to charm you; it is a masterpiece, an adorable masterpiece, consecrated to the glory of Sobramanyé and giving the impression of a piece of jewelry, artistically worked out to the last detail."

To find my way there I pass, as soon as I have arrived, through the big and little forts of the ancient citadel; by means of shaking old drawbridges, I cross deep moats close against the crenelated encircling wall. Then suddenly I find myself in an immense paved court. Here rises the great pagoda, the *gopura* of which, covered with symbolic figures, is more than two hundred feet high and has thirteen tiers crowned with a monolithic dome. A few feet away rises the colossal reclining bull of black marble (representing Sivâ) which is called *Nandy* and measures not less than thirteen feet in height. It is surrounded by a railing to the bars of which the faithful are accustomed to fasten gifts and votive offerings. Above my head, the vault of the pavilion which shelters the idol is decorated with many-colored frescoes of the most striking effect.

I advance a hundred feet to the right of the square, towards the jewel of Sobramanyé, which

attracts and fascinates me. And slowly, as one tastes an old Roman portal or a Gothic rose-window, I make the tour of the building and pick out its beauties, one by one. They are exquisite, these somber sculptures which, owing to their lightness, one might easly mistake for wood-carvings! On the other hand there is nothing very striking to be noted in the interior in which reigns a mysterious obscurity and which one reaches by a flight of steps, bordered on each side by a finely carved but massive balustrade of stone. But the chief characteristic of this little monument, that which most particularly arouses one's admiration, is the purity of line of the general plan, the regularity and solidarity of the courses and the basements; finally, the almost Greek simplicity shown by the workmen who cut these rigorously cylindrical pillars, which one would swear were inspired by those of the Theseion at Athens.

Strange that a people who created such admirable masterpieces should have degenerated in our day to the point of ignoring, almost disliking them, and in any case of preferring to them such somber horrors as, for example, the so-called "palace" of the deposed ex-Rajah of Tanjore, whose descendants are today pensioned by England! Certainly I should not care to share the enthusiasm of my

good boy, Subbaraya-Pillaï, for that large and insignificant white building which was shown to us by a ragged guardian. I had to hold myself in so as not to burst out laughing at the incoherent decorations of the rooms, the bad taste of this petty provincial establishment, the ridiculous portraits of the sovereigns, smeared on by some wretched dauber, the treasures (worthy of the *boutique à treize!)* of the present Ranee, who is more than seventy years of age, and the modern lusters, dusty, heavy, absurd, unquestionably imported from Düsseldorf or Leipzig.

Poor naïve kinglets!

And, dreaming, I invoke the splendor of the vanished ages, the great ancestors of these folk who raised those holy stones to the glory of their gods, the sublime builders of the pagoda and the little temple. In the street, just now, a Mohammedan procession winds past to the sound of a barbaric and yet harmonious music; the crowd makes way before the trophies, the standards, the fifes and the madly beating tom-toms; the acolytes of the priests throw ashes over the bent heads; three elephants, two camels, richly caparisoned horses led by the hands of the Sepoys, close the march. This stately procession makes its way toward a pond of stagnant water, where sterile

women come to bathe, the banks of which are peopled with monkeys.

The sun sinks slowly over a vision of what must once have been the splendor of the kings of Tanjore, a splendor that today is fallen forever.

Of Trichinopoly, a large city of 91,000 inhabitants, watered by the Cauvery, there is nothing very much to be said. The interest of the visit lies exclusively in the ascent of an enormous rock, 236 feet high, on the flat top of which rises a fort and a temple dedicated to Sivâ. One reaches it by a stairway of about three hundred steps cut in the solid rock and skirting a line of little chapels generally consecrated to the worship of Vishnu. From the terrace one looks down over a magical view: from the foot of the rock rises the long murmur of the town, the river stretches out its silver *moiré* ribbon, the palm forest undulates in the little shivers of the wind. Bells, ringing, scatter their pious notes on the air; it is the brass clappers of Saint Joseph's College, which is directed by the French Jesuit fathers, calling the students to prayer. The history of India tells us that in this city there took place, in the eighteenth century, memorable battles between Dupleix and our English friends of today; it is not surprising, therefore,

that the French tourist should find there many a memory and vestige of the former inhabitants.

Through the narrow streets of the lower city, where I jostle an incessant procession of carts drawn by zebus or little nervous horses, I drive to the temples of Sri-Ragham and Jambukeswar. The former, dedicated to Vishnu, is one of the most gigantic known; its outer encircling wall measures no less than 2,475 feet by 2,880 and is twenty feet high; seven successive enclosing walls, built in squares and separated by three hundred and fifty feet from each other, surround it with their massive battlements; the central enclosure, which is entered only by the officiating priests, contains relics; the total population of Brahmans and merchants who live in the interior of this sanctuary is estimated at more than 20,000 souls. From the architectural point of view, I note the first entrance, the superstructure of which is adorned with allegorical frescoes while the colonnades seem inspired by the Doric style. Above the walls there soar into the air the twenty-one *gopuras* or pyramidal bell-towers, sculptured and carefully worked like the doors of a cathedral, with this difference, that the statues of the saints are replaced by monsters and divinities in ferocious, gesticulating attitudes. But the marvel of

marvels is undeniably the façade of rearing horses in high relief, upholding the massive entablature with their heads. The most phlegmatic European is struck dumb with admiration in the presence of these incomparable sculptures whose state of preservation is perfect.

The pagoda of Jambukeswar offers a certain analogy with the great temple of Tanjore: there are the same richly sculptured *gopuras,* the same sacred ponds with greenish, stagnant water, which seem to be no longer used by the pilgrims for their ablutions. . . . But what especially characterizes this monument, which is dedicated to Sivâ, is the magnificent series of columns by which one approaches the Holy of Holies, where a sacred elephant stands guard on the threshold. Near this emaciated pachyderm, my guide points out to me a fakir thug, of the sect of the Stranglers of the Nerbuddah, who has been rendered famous by his three unsuccessful attempts at suicide. While quite young, having submitted to the ordeal of the Virvir, of the Nirvanist P'aousigars, this Dandu-Baba had himself suspended over a brazier by an iron hook fastened into the flesh of his back. The muscles tore out and he fell, but only rolled on the burning coals. Later, at Benares, having fastened jars pierced with holes about his body, the fanatic

flung himself into the Ganges, which little by little immersed him. But he was pulled out in time by a fisherman. Finally, at Puri, on the coast of Orissa, he tried to get himself crushed beneath the car of Juggernaut. But the front wheels having become suddenly wedged, he got off with two crushed fingers. Since then he has resigned himself to living . . . unless some day, when the sacred elephant has eaten too much, he decides to let his foot come down on him like a pestle!

CHAPTER XXII

THE HORRIFYING COAST OF MALABAR

Some simple ethnographical remarks—With the French Administrator of Mahé—"Do you like sardines? They have put them everywhere"—The buffalo's agony—Cochin, the Indian Venice—A Court of Miracles—Nightmare visions—White and Black Jews—On board the "pirate" *Gneisenau!*

I DO not know why the classical itinerary for the traveler in the South of India is generally limited to a visit to the coast of Coromandel, disdaining that of Malabar.

Not that I wish to dispute the incontestable architectural superiority of the temples of the former to those of the latter, which hardly exist; but when one sets out to make the acquaintance of a country as many-sided, as varied, as full of marvels as the peninsula of Hindustan, it does not do to take as one's only objective the contemplation of sanctuaries and ancient royal dwellings; one must also pay attention to ethnographical problems, to the enthralling examination

of the distinctive characteristics of the races, to the study of curious customs, varying infinitely one from another. Take, for example, the case of the Moplas, a mixed race of the Arab-Dravidians, of the Mussulman faith, who appeared at the time of the Portuguese, especially during the great expeditions of Vasco de Gama, who wear that queer-looking turban and those high wooden sandals that recall the Japanese clogs. Later on I shall have occasion to speak also of the White Jews and the Black Jews of Cochin, no less interesting than the Topas, a mixed French, Portuguese and Indian product, settled in the region of Mahé and Calicut. One must see *everything* in India, or almost everything. . . . And in this remaining category I shall give first place to the coast of Malabar.

From Erode to Calicut is an extremely picturesque trip; wooded mountains, rocks, ponds covered with reeds and abounding in water-fowl, and above which soar the great fisher-eagles, with their brown plumage and white heads. The mountainous appearance of the country is a relief after the plains and rice-fields of Coromandel. But how many difficulties lie in the way of entering this unhealthy province, where cholera, bubonic plague and leprosy are endemic—strangely enough, since the land is well-aired and watered

by large rivers, very much like those of the South of Ceylon. In order to be able to stop at Calicut, at Mahé, at Cochin, I was obliged to fortify myself with a plague-passport, which certifies that I am not infected with any of the aforementioned maladies—a wise measure dictated by the authorities in the desire not to increase the scourge.

After a short stop at Calicut (the native town of calico, dear to our housewives, where I hastily visit a cotton spinning-mill) I reach Mahé, our charming French possession on the Western coast.

There I am received and treated in the most hospitable fashion by the Colonial Administrator, M. Louit, who is temporarily replacing M. Barbier, the Resident. Thanks to him I have the honor of occupying a beautiful room in the Resident's palace, a historic chamber, if you please, in which Dupleix slept, then Mahé de la Bourdonnais. M. Louit takes me for a stroll over the ancient crenelated ramparts, now transformed into terraces and gardens, with an outlook over the sea and the estuary of the little river of Mahé. I could imagine myself on the Riviera, were it not for just that little river, shaded by cocoanut trees and quite Asiatic, which serves as a frontier for our enclosure. In fact a wooden bridge, owned jointly, separates—cordially, I may say—the

French shore from the British shore. We visit the "native village," and its quarter inhabited by the half-breed Topas. I say *native village,* for it must not be imagined that there exists here a neighboring little French or European quarter, such as there is at Pondichéry. Like Chandernagor, Karikal and Yanaon, Mahé contains, one might say, no colonists. If in each of these settlements you count up the Administrator, the druggist, the missionary and two or three good Sisters, you will obtain the total of the six or seven persons of our nationality. Oh! pardon me, I was forgetting Mahé's one French colonist, a certain M. de la Haye-Jousselin, a widower and something of a misanthrope, who directs an important sardine cannery on the *English* side of the river! This sardine industry—for the fish abound in these parts—ought to attract to Mahé more than one of our Bretons who are complaining of the disappearance of the precious fish at Douarnenez, Audierne and Concarneau. Real fortunes might be built up there in no time: the cost of labor is next to nothing and the oil of the earth-nuts, popularly called *cacahouettes,* is ready to one's hand. The only thing to be thought of is the soldering and the importation of boxes. I hope my appeal will be heard and understood, but in a somewhat

more patriotic fashion than that of M. de la Haye-Jousselin, the French colonist who has established himself on Anglo-Saxon territory!

And those sardines! There are vast quantities of them, too many! I made this discouraging discovery during the course of a dinner to which I was asked by the Administrator. The trouble was caused by the sardine heads, cut off and flung to the chickens and animals as food: creamed eggs, fricasseed chicken, roast duck *au riz créole* and with hearts of palm, yes, *everything* had the taste of this fish! My host positively tore his hair. "It's frightful," he said to me; "shutting up my fowls in a carefully wired enclosure and making them fast for several days after I have bought them isn't of any use. Nothing does any good. I believe the air itself is *sardined!*"

We took coffee on the terrace, by moonlight. M. Louit extolled to me the resources of the little colony of eight thousand souls which he administers. His native subjects, it appears, are very easy to live with. But that does not prevent the solitude from weighing on him. And there is a great deal of joy for him in the thought of the next stop of the cruiser *Dupleix,* which is to coal at Mahé in a week's time. The *Dupleix* at Mahé! History is certainly nothing but repetitions.

"Well, everything is doing nicely," the Administrator said to me jovially, rubbing his hands; "at least for a while I shan't have to eat sardines all by myself!"

But an end to joking. A horrifying, repulsive, pitiful spectacle awaits me at Cochin, the center of the plague, cholera, leprosy and elephantiasis.

Cochin is situated on the point of a peninsula, on a sort of lagoon which one reaches by steamboat from Ernakulam, the terminus of the railway. The whole trip, before one reaches this last spot, presents a picturesque panorama: it is not quite the jungle, since one can see emerging here and there from the underbrush oases of cocoanut and banana trees and clumps of bamboos serving as enclosures, from which rise up flocks of crows with black heads and tails and chestnut-colored wings. In the fields the peasants go about naked to the waist, their heads shaven, with the exception of a little round tuft on the very top of their skulls, a tuft knotted into a chignon and flung forward on the left side, sometimes above the forehead. The women proudly carry their whimpering offspring on their backs, lifting high their fine, firm breasts which have never known the torture of the corset. The language spoken by these people is Malaysian, an idiom related to Tamil but nevertheless

distinct. One finds also among the coast populations the descendants of pure Arab stock from the land of Oman.

Just before the juncture of Schoranur, where one changes cars, our train receives a shock. We stop. The cowcatcher in front of the locomotive has just knocked over and crushed a buffalo. I lean out of the window and make questioning signals to the conductor. "Nothing," replies this far from orthodox Hindu, as he whistles to start again. These things happen so often! . . . We continue on our way without troubling any more about the unhappy beast which, its side torn, is dying on the embankment. Through the palms, stirred now and then by a warm breeze, I distinguish the bell-tower of a Catholic church. Who knows whether in this forgotten mission, some compatriot of ours is not leading a glorious and unknown existence? . . . At the stations, the armed Sepoys, infinitely respectful of the white man, stand at attention and give me the military salute. On the quay of Angamali, the first station of the independent State of the Maharajah of Travancore, my boy falls into an endless and very inopportune conversation with one of his friends whom he has met by chance. I find him positively comic, this friend, with his European collar and necktie fastened

over a pale pink shirt, the tails of which float out *over* a dirty old pair of gray trousers. But this Hindu fashion of wearing the shirt should not surprise me; have I not already noticed it among most of the Afghans, and even some of the Kashmirians? I get off at Cochin just as night is falling. Everything is silent, dark. Not a carriage, not a horse, not a draught-animal. You would think you were in Venice. The illusion is complete when the Malabar gondolas glide noiselessly by over the turgid water of the canals. Shadows wander along the single interminable street; on the doorsteps are crouching bodies, twisted as if in convulsions, whether living souls asleep or dying souls in agony, one does not know. At times the highway is literally blocked with animals: I have to climb circumspectly over a veritable barricade of horns, the horns of zebus, rams and goats. My boy and my porters follow me grumbling. What an extraordinary arrival in this mysterious, faraway city!

Why I do not know, but this first night I sleep badly, in the room of the dawk-bungalow where I have taken up my quarters. Intolerable heat, mosquitoes humming ravenously about my mosquito netting, creepings and crawlings over the straw mattings on the floor. . . . A certain expe-

rience of the tropics has somewhat hardened me against these nocturnal terrors; long nights passed under a tent have accustomed me, during the hours of sleep, to the company of insects and reptiles that I have known were harmless. To tell the truth, I am more affected by the disconcerting manner of this arrival in an unknown city notoriously unwholesome and dangerous, owing to the contagious diseases that abound there, a city to which the tourist very rarely ventures.

But it was on my awakening that I was greeted with the true nightmare. Never shall I forget the frightful spectacle of these people of Cochin, dragging through the streets, through the alleys, along the canals, the spectral horror of their ills. On all sides one saw nothing but frightfully distended legs and feet, swollen by the œdema of elephantiasis—what is called in popular medical language the *Cochin leg*. I turn away with pity and nausea from these unfortunates, the calves of whose legs look like tree-trunks: the least affected ones look as if they were wearing heavy sewerman's boots. This form of leprosy is, it appears, hereditary and congenital; it is due principally to impure water. Medical treatment brings but slight results; the only consolation of the sufferers is to see how many others (almost all, in fact) are in

the same boat with themselves. After all, these poor wretches do not seem to realize the full import of their repulsive infirmity. The absence of pain and the continuance of their normal lives have, no doubt, much to do with this. Some of them even profit by the disgust which they inspire in foreigners, and make a good little income out of it.

But nothing equals the hideousness of the lepers suffering from facial lupus. These may be called the *living dead;* their faces, devoured by the disease, are nothing but one wound. No fantastic vision of Edgar Allan Poe could give any idea of these flat faces, whose eyes devour you with their lidless stare, whose gaping nasal cavity is an oozing hole, covered with flies, whose mouth, lipless but filled with dazzling teeth, is fixed in a perpetual, motionless grin.

Compared with these disinherited ones, the mere sight of whom makes me ill, the immense mass of the maimed and deformed and the other Quasimodos with whom the town swarms, is only an Asiatic, perhaps a slightly more brutal, transposition of our medieval Court of Miracles. I quickly hail a rickshaw, which is dashing by. It snatches me away from the horde that surrounds me and to which I throw a handful of small coins.

Claw-like hands stretch out. But we are off at full speed toward the British cantonment and independent Cochin. The Maharajah has fixed the sum of two annas as the toll-rate, or more exactly the entrance fee, into his State—a curious remnant of Indian feudalism, which the European rulers have scrupulously respected. Hardly have we passed the boundary when an armed Sepoy rises up from some straw and warns me in bad English that the quarter into which I am going is at the moment ravaged by the plague. This morning they have burned fifty corpses again. I judge it more prudent to retrace my path and postpone my visit to the carved wooden temple of native Cochin.

So I give the order: "To the Jewish quarter!"

We go down a large avenue, then through a series of infinitely curious little streets, where I want to stop and take some photographs. But to my great astonishment, the Malabar boy who is pushing me refuses, with a gentle obstinacy, to make any stop. "No good, master, no good!" And we continue on our wild jolting way. A few hours later I learn that this quarter is a prey to cholera morbus. I have had a narrow escape! But here we are in Kalvati, where the White Jews live. At the end of this quarter we can already see the

outlines of the houses of Mottanchéri, the headquarters of the colony of Black Jews. Hindu temples and synagogues jostle one another. On the doorsteps of the dwellings are beautiful Jewesses, with white, faintly bronzed skins, whose type recalls that of Hagar or Rebecca. The men and the little boys are almost uniformly clad in light pajamas imported from the Occident: they have bare feet thrust into sandals or slippers and in general no head-dress, except the rabbis and old men, who wear the traditional Jewish turban. Altogether, in our day, these White Jews number 200. The date of their immigration goes back to the last destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem. It is a strange thing, but this little agglomeration of White Jews abstains disdainfully from any contact with their black-skinned co-religionists. These latter, however, are the converts of their ancestors; the same Talmud is taught without distinction in all their synagogues. But nothing has been able to prevail against the prejudice of color.

In the afternoon, to escape the sickening spectacle of the lepers and the victims of elephantiasis, I lounge about the port and wait for the fishermen to pull in their nets. Out in the roads, a big warship is sending up from her smokestacks heavy

columns of black smoke. It is the *Gneisenau,* the German armored cruiser, manned by a crew of seven hundred and charged, this year, with carrying the Crown Prince on a hunting trip to India. On the quay, the officers and sailors come and go. My fluency in their tongue permits me to begin a courteous conversation with the ship's doctor, Herr Gustav Koch of Hamburg. Through him I learn that the dingey which has just brought him to shore is awaiting three charming American ladies and two of their compatriots, one of whom is a consul, who have asked the favor of being the prince's guests and visiting his warship.

"If you wish to join them," he adds, "nothing is simpler. Here they are. Come on board with us."

"With great pleasure, thank you." In my heart I am rejoicing at this escape from the obsession of the pathological nightmare, nor am I displeased at the chance to do a little authorized spying on the enemy ship. The dingey comes alongside. Salutations, presentations to our gracious companions; then an officer gives the signal for departure.

On the vessel Commander von Uslar and his staff are awaiting us.

* * * * * *

The years have gone by.

Why must the remembrance of this princely reception, when champagne flowed and the ship's orchestra played Yankee Doodle and the Marseillaise, be forever effaced and spoiled henceforth by the barbarous bombardment of Papeete, the work of this same *Gneisenau,* sunk shortly after off the Falklands by the valiant British fleet?

Never to my ear could those seven cannon shots that wished us farewell at Cochin have foretold the unjustifiable naval attack on the unfortified harbor of my dear and poetic Tahiti! I shall always see in imagination the panic of those delightful and indolent Polynesian islanders fleeing desperately before the Teuton shells, and imploring on the threshold of the old palace of Pomaré the protection of the machine-guns that had been landed from the *Zêlée,* the poor *Zêlée,* shamefully bombarded by the pirates on the coral seas!

CHAPTER XXIII

MADURA THE MYSTERIOUS

The Mussulman *Moharram* at Madura—Indian Aïssaouas—The Great Temple and its treasures—Under the trading arcades of Poutou Mandabam—Noon in the streets—Last picture of India which, alas! I am leaving.

FROM Trichinopoly in a few hours one reaches Madura, the holy city of southern India, the Tamil Benares.

What strikes you on entering this city is the total absence of hotels, restaurants, banks, in a word of all that the European, coming from Colombo or Madras, thinks he has a right to expect. The visitor is obliged to take his meals and even sleep in the very station of Madura, where they have fitted up a great dining-room and several scantily furnished bedrooms. There is, indeed, a dawk-bungalow for the use of strangers, but the few rooms that go to make it up are uncomfortable and unsanitary; moreover, one is exposed to the promiscuity of

THE PAGODA OF JAMBUKESWAR, NEAR TRICHINOPOLY

THE ENVIRONS OF MADURA—THE PAGODA AND POND OF TEPPA-KULAM

THE CAR OF THE JUGGERNAUT

SRIRANGAN—ENTRANCE TO THE TEMPLE

the natives, who come and go before the threshold, as well as to the deafening racket of wailing infants and beggars stammering out their long and monotonous litanies. Do not look in Madura, therefore, for English shops and street-cars. So much the better! There is an unbelievable amount of local color; one elbows a heterogeneous assembly of priests and merchants. The rarity of the European note is more striking in these surroundings than elsewhere. In the matter of vehicles, the little ox-carts called *djerkâs* are almost the only means of locomotion in this ancient city of Coromandel.

When I stopped off there for the first time, the great Mussulman feast of the Moharram was in full swing. It is a sort of carnival which takes place once a year, in January, and lasts eight days. It is in celebration of the defeat and massacre of the sons of Hussein and Hassan by the orthodox troops of Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet. The fanatics smear themselves with wax, daub their faces and their whole bodies with violent colors, trick themselves out in ragged finery of all shades, and are escorted by a crowd of street urchins. *"Dâou seya mandam andreh!"* they cry, waving their sabers and lances ferociously while, out of their respected paths, the drovers pull the little

zebus with their painted horns and their backs laden with shellfish, crying in their turn, *"Eï! Eï! 'ttah!"* The procession takes its way towards a circle dug in the earth and filled with lighted coals, in one of the village squares. These Aïssaouas then dash forward with savage cries toward the burning brazier, which they tread and cross, some running, others walking slowly, amid the loud acclamations of the spectators who watch the voluntary martyrs with devotion.

I leave these possessed spirits and these madmen to their savage practices and betake myself to the Great Temple, which is certainly entitled to be classed among the architectural marvels of the world. To reach it one goes down the great highway called Permal-Kohil, passing the pond of the same name. To the right rises the church of the Catholic mission about which are grouped the richest dwellings of the Madura merchants. Then I enter the West-Massis, which cuts the Permal-Kohil at right angles. There my curiosity is attracted by the capricious little designs and arabesques, drawn each morning in many-colored chalks on the pavement in front of the houses, as an homage to the tutelary deity. I admire also the beautiful fountain, presented to her fellow-citizens by a rich Hindu lady named Lakchmi,

which represents, from right to left, Sobramanyé, the second son of Sivâ, then Minakchi, his wife, then Ganésa, Sivâ's eldest son, whose elephant trunk falls in classic lines over his beneficent navel. And here is the great street of the West Tower, leading straight to the colossal temple, at the end of which, to the right, rises a little votive altar in the form of a *lingham*. (At daybreak old widows with shaven heads come to sprinkle it piously with red and white powder.) In the streets there is a veritable tintinnabulation of bracelets, rings, anklets, and those ear-rings that pull the lobe far down. Among poor women this last ornament is called *pambaram,* among the rich *itediki.* Very strange, also, are the heavy nose-pendants called *mouketti,* and those fastened to the partition of the nose and called *pillako.* Nothing could be more droll, finally, than those shameless little girls and those quite naked babies whose only costume consists of a silver heart hung from their hips by a cord.

I arrive in front of the entrance *gopura.* It is the fourth porch of the West Tower within the parallelogram of the great surrounding wall; its own walls are painted with the colors of Vishnu. Great cocoanut trees with waving tops sway above the flowering bananas. But what religious majesty

presides over the entrance to the South Portal of the sanctuary! Two gigantic stone elephants stand guard there, near the pond of the Golden Lotus. A little way off I see the apocalyptic Car of Juggernaut which, during the great festivals, is dragged by human arms through the principal street of the city. About it are grouped, like humble satellites, little cars covered with straw or sheltered under a hangar of corrugated iron. In our day there are still men fanatical enough to get themselves crushed under its massive, holy wheels. This thought obsesses me; and it is not without a certain emotion that I venture for the first time into the hall of Peret, where the sacred paroquets, cockatoos and parrots are chattering in their gilded cages suspended from the walls and from vaults moldy with saltpeter.

How can one express the marvel of those splendid high reliefs representing elephants, lions, monsters, gods and goddesses, grimacing genii, all carved out of the solid blocks of stone and as carefully worked as the Gothic lace of our cathedrals! In striking contrast, there rises to the left, encrusted, as it were, on the breast of this floral sculpture, a little black idol, dirty, greasy, grotesquely clad in a white shirt bordered with red. It is my sympathetic friend Ganésa again, bidding me wel-

come. Really I cannot do better than to sprinkle his pedestal, as the custom is, with a libation of cocoanut milk.

"The *Prakaram,* sahib!"

It is my native guide, my faithful Subbaraya Pillaï, who utters this exclamation in which reverence and fear are mingled. One of the mysterious galleries of the temple has just opened before me, a second interior, covered passage where reigns a disquieting half-light. It leads to the great hall where the priests, on certain occasions, are accustomed to spread out in sumptuous flat baskets the treasures of Minakchi, the *Goddess-with-the-fish's-eyes.* It is very seldom that one can see these treasures. The Brahmans do not permit the simple tourist (even if he is furnished with British recommendations from high quarters) to look at them save at a charge of fifteen rupees, in addition to a tip of five rupees for the guardian. Total, about seven dollars, which is rather dear. Fortunately it so happened that on my visit I met there a high English official from Southern India, whose guest I had been in the country of Malabar. Thanks to him I was able, without untying my purse, to view these incomparable treasures piously preserved in a cave where the vampire bats wheel and flit with their funereal laughter. An unbelievable heap of

precious stones, most of them square-cut and clumsily inserted in their mountings of chased or filigreed gold: pearls, rubies, diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, beryls, topazes, etc. . . . The diamonds attract my attention particularly: they are enormous but badly set off, rose-cut, or like fragments of glass, sometimes even of dull glass. We are far from the diamond-cutters of Amsterdam and the brilliant displays of Paris! . . . I observe the beautiful tapestries embroidered with pearls, head-dresses, hats, bonnets, tunics of multi-colored silks but dirty—all these riches displayed with a taste that is naïve and barbaric.

I next visit the celebrated Room of the Thousand Columns (in reality there are only 997). What refinement in the sculptures and the ornamentation! The general plan, also, is worthy of admiration because of its beautiful and severe arrangement. In this hall are a great quantity of pasteboard masks for the sacred processions, as well as tambourines and little bells used to announce to the people the passage of the idols. Still preceded by my guide, without whom I should certainly lose my way in this labyrinth, I proceed toward the dark cavern where the two genii with multiple arms and legs, who are named Djéa and Vidjéa, defend the entrance to the tabernacle.

There, wrapped in its swaddling-clothes, dim and indistinct, is the grotesque doll that represents Sivâ the Redoubtable. Very shortly a procession is going to carry it away. . . .

But what is this? From the altar of the planets and the constellations, a pleasant fruity odor spreads through the vault, the exhalations of flowers, fruits and sweet-smelling oils brought by the faithful. A great throng of pilgrims, in fact, has just plunged into the gallery of the Prakaram, in order to file, their offerings in their hands, before the altar of the sanguinary Kali, then before that of Sivâ. This fresh and springlike odor pursues me to the exit. In the darkness through which I have been floundering, in the chaos of this incomprehensible and age-old Sanskrit theogony, the whiffs of this perfume that reach my nostrils give me a delicious sensation of renewal. The European soul feels itself so constrained in the mysteries of the Hindu religion, the secrets of which it can pierce only so incompletely! It is already too highly favored if it can grasp by intuition the sealed meaning of the rites and ceremonies of which it is the witness.

Bright rays of sunshine now light up the portal of the Minakchi-Naïk gallery. It is here that, in the evening at about seven o'clock, the Brahmans

light little rudimentary night-lights, simple wicks dipped in oil which, when night has come, illumine the entrance to the passages and caves. Under the arcades young girls and children are laughingly selling flowers, fruits and ex-votos, little perfumed sachets, seals and many-colored powders; a little further on are rice-cakes, destined to feed the pilgrims and the guardians of the immense pagoda. On the steps at my feet, little boys are playing and quarreling; their heads are half-shaven, after the fashion of Coromandel, the remaining hair being fastened together in tufts or twisted behind the head, which makes them look like little Chinese.

"Salaam, sahib, salaam!"

Leaving their games, they prostrate themselves as I pass, calling down on me all the blessings of the Brahmanistic Trimûrti. The whole crowd of them, delighted with the few annas I have thrown them, have dragged me toward the great elephant dedicated to Sivâ. Daubed and tatooed, the pachyderm, fastened by its feet to the pillars that surround it, swings its trunk heavily from left to right and breaks forth, from moment to moment, into a long trumpeting that tells me how impatiently it is awaiting my titbits. There are a great many

of these elephants consecrated to the divinities in the interior of the temples. The piety of the faithful, I imagine, provides for their subsistence more than the care of the ushers or guardians licensed by the British authorities and entrusted with the policing and internal administration.

Here I am, quite outside of the first cincture of the temple, in the merchants' hall called Poutou Mandabam, the new market built by the king Tirumala Naïk in the seventeenth century of our era, and which cost that potentate the sum of five million dollars. Impossible to imagine, still more so to describe, the extravagant richness of those four rows of columns, all of sculptured stone, which constitute a veritable forest of high and low reliefs, wrought and decorated to an infinite degree! Under these vaults, the bronze and copper merchants, the potters, the booksellers, the tailors, the carpenters, the cabinet-makers, the goldsmiths toil and cry their wares, squatting on the ground. I have the good luck, thanks to my guide's interpreting, to acquire some very old and rare forks of chased copper, which have been used in the sacrifices, as well as some antique statuettes of gods and goddesses destined to increase my little Hindu pantheon.

The poignant hour of departure is approacning. . . . Before I enter the train again for Tuticorin, Ceylon, Java and Angkor, I want to fill my eyes, I want to line my bags, too, with all those dear knick-knacks of art that will bring India back to me.

We are passing through the last wall and across the city; following the labyrinth of streets and passages under the hot noonday sun, we reach the station. We file past the shops of the perfumers, preparing their pastes, their cosmetics and their unguents. Very curious, these shops, in the back of which are cages, each containing a living skunk, the glands of which, as we know, furnish the odorous matter that is the basis of Indian perfumery. Some young girls pass, crowned with pinks and smeared with curcuma. Their black eyes laugh in their saffron faces. They are on their way, I see, to a little shop to buy a cocoanut the refreshing milk of which they will eagerly drink.

Above our heads eagles are wheeling, ravens croaking, while palm-rats chase one another over the tiled roofs and the interwoven palms and motionless lizards bask in the sunlight.

It is the noon hour, under the cloudless sky of India, to which I must say farewell this evening

(for the second time, alas!) with the same pang at my heart and the same grave look one gives to people and things one loves—and that one must leave without the *absolute* certainty of seeing them again.

CHAPTER XXIV

DEAD HINDU CITIES

Mirages of the past—Anuradhapura, the Cingalese Nineveh—The Javanese temples of Mendoet and Boroboedoer—The life of Buddha in sculpture—Hindu colonies in Cambodia—Angkor, the prodigious and mysterious.

ONE of the most vivid and lasting impressions of my youth as a student will always be that luminous morning when, for the first time, I climbed up the Propylæum of the Parthenon.

I had not mounted the Acropolis with the design of making there—after the fashion of Chateaubriand, Renan, Barrès—the mystic or philosophical or pagan prayer which each of us, according to his ego, feels rising invincibly to his lips. If such an audacity had occurred to me for a moment, the insufficiency of my means would have at once revealed the sacrilegiousness of it.

Having reached the summit of the sacred hill, therefore, I turned and looked about. And I was

immediately seized, conquered, overwhelmed by the august setting and the serene beauty of the place of prayer. At my feet a second city had risen up, an ancient city, how different from the modern city, prosaic, turbulent and busy. For the first time in my life, I saw a dead city, the Athens of Pericles, of Plato, Æschylus and Phidias, to which my still recent studies in the humanities had so tenderly attached me. A dead city! Can you understand what magic there is in this word for a twenty-year-old spirit? To bend over the vestiges of the past, to attempt to draw out its secret by reading the life of a vanished or a long submerged people on the bas-reliefs of a wall or the columns of a temple, from the pillar to the frieze, running through the whole scale of the capital, the abacus, the architrave; to pick out along the paved streets the traces of cart-wheels; to lean over vaults still impregnated with whiffs of ancient incense where millions of prayers, anthems, imprecations, menacing or naïve, have, as it were, crystallized. Ah! that beautiful, captivating, fascinating search! How one feels one's whole self vibrate to it, senses, heart and brain! . . .

It was in this way that I, the child of a supremely living city, Paris, became, during the course of my travels, a passionate lover of dead cities.

And in particular of three ancient cities of Hindu colonists that shone, centuries and centuries ago, with the same brilliancy as the Greek Alexandria in Egypt, and the Latin Timgad in Algeria: Anuradhapura, Boroboedoer, Angkor! . . . Three names, three epochs, three glories of the past, of the time when India, the prodigious sower, scattered its excess of men to the four winds of the world, in order to reap the harvest of kingdoms!

Anuradhapura is the barbarous name of the ancient Anuragrammum, which was known to the Romans and was for twelve centuries the capital of Ceylon. Situated in the center of the island, about fifty-four miles from Trincomalee where the pearl fisheries are, it bears the deep imprint of the Hindu influence and civilization. Its ruin and devastation were the work equally of the conquering Tamils and Malabars, whose fanatical Brahmanism had driven them forth in a crusade against the Buddhism that was then threatening to win over the entire island. Why is it that the passage of the invaders has left—as did that of the *Thaï* at Angkor—only a dead city, abandoned and sacked, about which the jungle has protectingly wound its octopus-like arms? . . . You fall into a reverie as you contemplate these temples and palaces which were built two centuries before Christ,

the home of a splendor and magnificence that made Anuradhapura the rival of Babylon, Nineveh and Persepolis. But however devastated it may be today, this "City buried under the vines," as Pierre Loti has exquisitely named it, still permits us a glimpse, here and there, of some marvel which is intact, or almost intact: the fish-pond of Pokuna, a short distance from the Queen's Baths, where only the bull-frogs, the tortoises and the water adders disport themselves today; the forest of columns of the pagoda of Lankarama, with its almost Ionian abaci; the decorative cornice of the great, massive *dagoba* of Ruanwelli and its curious divinities with their head-dresses of hieratic tiaras made from the body of a crocodile, the tail of a bird, the trunk of an elephant; the *upright* statues of King Dutughémunu and his priests; the foundations and courses of Abayashiri, the truncated column of which dominates all the surrounding country from the top of its hill; and also the sculptured doorways of the princely and priestly dwellings, the parvis of lunar marble, decorated with a procession of different animals, all strikingly life-like; finally those dreaming Buddhas, life-size, which one meets at every step, under the trees, in the branches, and which almost frighten one with

their fixed gaze and the tranquil, mocking expression of their lips.

Oh! what a strange thing it is, this necropolis of stone, over which the sun sheds in spots a light which is bright indeed, but powerless to bring to life a whole past of activity, luxury and opulence, of tumultuous, sensual, frenzied joy. . . .

Listen to this old, this very old and very evocative Cingalese inscription:

"Innumerable are the temples and palaces of Anuradhapura; their golden cupolas and pavilions glitter in the sunlight. In the streets, there is a multitude of soldiers armed with bows and arrows. Elephants, horses, chariots, thousands of men, come and go continually. There are jugglers, dancers, musicians of divers countries whose timbals and instruments are ornamented with gold. The greatest streets are those of the Moon and the King, the street covered with sand, and a fourth. And in the Street of the Moon there are eleven thousand houses."

And today all this that once lived, laughed, sang, loved and suffered, all this is nothing but a kingdom of crumbling ruins, gray rubbish and verdure on a foundation of ocher-colored earth.

Sic transit gloria mundi.

Less poetry, less reverie, less melancholy, more

TEPPA-KULAM—THE TEMPLE AND STATUETTES OF KALI THE SLAYER

MADURA—THE GREAT PAGODA

BOROBOEDOER (JAVA)—THE GREAT TEMPLE DEDICATED TO BUDDHA

GIANT HEADS OF BUDDHA OF THE CITY OF ANGOR-THOM

religious feeling emanates from the dead cities of Indo-Java.

It is in the region called Midden-Java, or the heart of Java, that the principal monuments of Hindu inspiration are assembled; almost all of them go back to the year 800 of the Sjâka era, that is to say, to the ninth century of our Christian era. Such, for example, are the temples of Tjandi-Bima, Prambanam and Mendoet, which reveal many traits in common. The architecture is somewhat heavy and squat, without real grandeur; here and there, among the confused heaps of stones, one finds some fragment of a bas-relief, some allegorical statue relating to the theogony of the Vedas; strictly speaking, there is nothing astonishing, nothing unique, save perhaps the pagoda of Mendoet, which the volcano Mérapi covered with ashes in the ninth century and only brought to light a thousand years later. The square base of this pagoda, built of brick covered with sandstone, gives it somewhat the appearance of a mausoleum. The bas-reliefs that adorn it represent fables, among them the apologue of the tortoise and the two ducks. Other symbolical sculptures, also, are to be noted a little to the front of the steep, projecting stairway that passes under the pyramidal vault. In the interior of the sanctuary are three

colossal figures of Buddha, not squatting, in the legendary position, but seated in Occidental fashion, the head aureoled with a sort of flame. At Tjandi-Sewoe, another archæological pilgrimage, there are only ruins, except for two grimacing and grotesque kneeling genii that seem to be keeping guard over the foundations of a vanished palace of dreams.

Quite different is Boroboedoer, the marvel of Java, the architectural rival of Angkor.

Boroboedoer (the construction of which was contemporaneous with Charlemagne) signifies in Javanese "Thousand Buddhas." It is a strange vision, a building the first and last of its kind, resembling no other monument of Brahmanic inspiration; it is, if I dare to use such a figure, a hymn in stone to the greater glory of Buddha, the Reformer.

Imagine an immense bell, itself adorned with a multitude of other little open-work bells carved upon it, the whole framed by the summit of the volcano Mérapi, nine thousand feet high, and the peak of Mount Soembing, about ten thousand feet high. In addition to its pedestal, which is partially buried in the earth, and to its *dagoba,* or central bell-tower which, they say, shelters some relics of the great Contemplator—the temple has

seven stories, or more exactly seven terraces. (Observe this number seven which one meets mysteriously in all the Sanskrit myths, and for which many other religions show an elective affinity.) About one hundred and sixty feet high and with a total length of about three hundred and twenty-five feet, the edifice is turned towards the four cardinal points, as is shown by the four stairways passing under the curiously carved doorways. Two hundred statues of Buddha and fourteen hundred bas-reliefs serve as decorations.

One must wander at one's leisure along these galleries, open to the sky, to study and sometimes decipher the meaning of these astonishing sculptures which Dr. Leemans, the learned Dutch archæologist, and the late king of Siam, Chulalongkorn, brought to the attention of the civilized world in 1896. It also seems likely that the inspiration of Christianity—the monument dates from the ninth century of our era—was not absolutely foreign to those who adapted certain of the legends represented there. But it is the single instance of anything being borrowed by the builders of Boroboedoer from other religions.

While at Angkor we shall soon see Buddhism and Brahmanism existing side by side, at Boroboedoer, on the contrary, we find nothing but the

single, final glorification of Siddhartha Gautama, surnamed Cakya-Muni (the ascetic), then Buddha (he who comprehends). In all the bas-reliefs that run along the base of the friezes of Boroboedoer, cover the entablatures, wind along the quasi-ogival porticoes, there mounts up towards the central *dagoba* as it were an interminable acclamation. All the phases of the life of the Regenerator, the obscurest as well as the most glorious, are respectfully and chronologically recorded: his birth, first, at Kapilavastou, in the garden of the Loubini where, as the king's son, surrounded and adored by all the gods in the Hindu Pantheon, he receives on the head a rain of lotus blossoms fallen from the skies, while the choirs of Bodhisattvas or friendly genii intone his praises; then his adolescence and his intellectual precocity which astonished and stupefied his masters and all who surrounded him; then his marriage to the princess Gopa, his life of luxury and pleasure; then, on a walk one day, his successive meetings with an old man, a leper, a corpse and a monk, and the reflections suddenly inspired in him by the weakness and nothingness of human vanities; his flight from the royal palace that very evening to go and taste among the philosophers and hermits the first-fruits of the pure and infinite joys of the Initiation; his

retreat for six years in a distant forest, with the animals of the jungle as his only companions; his instruction and his fast of forty-nine days at the foot of the sacred fig-tree, the Bo, in the shade of which, struck with grace, his soul finally opened to knowledge.

Later on we shall see him surrounded by his favorite *Bhikchous,* wandering all over India, converting kings, priests, warriors, beggars, always humble and gentle, preaching his belief, his head shaven, his body wrapped in a poor sari of yellow cloth, his only wealth the staff and the bowl from which as he journeyed he ate his frugal pittance. Then the circular bas-relief—which is always the same and unwinds like a ribbon from the base to the point of the edifice—shows us the death of the Reformer. It is night. . . . The Master, eighty-one years old, is seated in his favorite pose of meditation; he exhorts his disciples to follow no other guides than his doctrine and their own conscience. . . . The first ray of dawn pierces the sky, and Cakya-Muni enters into ecstasy, to sink gently into death and the Nirvana of his dreams and hopes.

Ah! what a beautiful missal page is that, carved in the living rock by marvelous artists to whom Faith, even more than the wings of genius, has given the secret of moving, century after century,

all the races and all the religious beliefs, without distinction, of our humanity.

Observe how far æsthetic pleonasm can go, how far it can insinuate itself. Here are little cupolas, in the shape of hand-bells, symmetrically surrounding the central *dagoba* which may be considered, if you wish, the chief bell, the "Savoyarde" of this basilica. There are thirty-two of them on the first terrace, twenty-four on the second, and sixteen on the third. Well, they all, through their stone open-work, permit one to see a naked Buddha seated in meditation. The idol—pardon me! the statue (for Cakya-Muni, who taught that other sages had existed before him, never demanded any worship)—the statue, I say, is enclosed in a sense under each of these big or little satellite bells, and so well enclosed that one does not know whether it is independent or forms a part of it. It is a marvelous achievement of art. A little more and we should expect to see invisible force move and set ringing these stone clappers, with their human shapes, giving them all at once a mysterious and paradoxical resonance. . . .

A curious thing! Buddhism has almost completely disappeared today in Java. But the population about Boroboedoer, which is principally composed of Mussulmen and Chinese, still believe

that by touching one of these imprisoned statues one imprisons one's happiness, and that by prostrating oneself and praying before the bas-relief of the birth of Buddha one is certain to obtain a numerous posterity. Islam, which, in our day, has replaced Buddhism in most of the Dutch settlements of this island-India, has unfortunately none of these charming and poetic superstitions. In the Mohammedan architecture and sculpture of the country there is the same poverty of the imagination, the same insipidity and the same mediocrity. At Sumatra, as at Java, I have seen, masquerading under the pompous name of mosques, mere commonplace square wooden houses, far more, I must confess, like our covered European markets than the splendors of marble and porphyry which I have admired at St. Sophia in Stamboul, the Djumna-Mosjid at Delhi and the Taj at Agra.

And now, at a bound, let us leap the space that separates Java, the Enchantress, from Angkor, that marvelous Angkor to which every one of us has made a pilgrimage, if only in our dreams! . . .

"Marvelous Angkor!"

It is also called *mysterious Angkor* because of its enigmatic history, its at once near and distant past, its uncertain and problematical existence.

. . . If you question some Cambodian about it, wandering through this desert of ruins and splendors, he will shake his head with a half-Nirvanic smile at the corner of his lips: "Winged genii built it all in one night. . . ."

And you will go your way charmed with the unsophisticated and deliciously legendary reply, without any other enlightenment about these strange Khmer, about the genesis of their colossal works of architecture and sculpture, or finally about the titanic wave that engulfed them a bare five or six centuries before our time. What we know of them, or what we believe we know of them, is that they built their first temples, the Prakhan and the Bayon, for example, toward the year 800 of our era, and reached the summit of their art about 1200, with this other Parthenon, the Great Temple, even richer and more grandiose than Angkor-Vat. Thus while we in Europe were raising heavenward the filigree-work of our Gothic flèches, they were continuing to make the Hindu basements and embankments, the marvelous bas-reliefs, like those of Egypt and Assyria, and to reproduce, by intuition and synthesis, the Doric column and the Corinthian capital. But what is even more astounding is that they had anticipated by three centuries the interlacing of Renaissance

foliage. Yes, these Khmer conceived before we did the most delicate motifs of our châteaus of the Loire! . . . The same efflorescence of stone blossoms today at Angkor-Vat as at Blois, with this perhaps paradoxical difference, that its obscurity, the lava at its roots and the octopus-like vines have preserved the former better from the slow, sure and inexorable devastation of time.

But, first of all, who were they, whence did they come, those whom the mystery of their past obliges us to call merely "the Masters of Angkor"? They were, it is believed, an artistic and warlike race, Brahmanistic in religion and probably belonging to the caste of the Brahmans. And it must have been one of their chiefs, Kambu by name, who founded toward the fifth century of our era the kingdom called Kambudjas, whence we have the modern name of Cambodia. The only exact knowledge we have of them is that their sway over the Indo-Chinese country which they established lasted eight centuries. Eight hundred years during which they raised, to the glory of their gods, immense temples surrounded by deep moats and ramparts pierced by semi-pointed doorways, permitting the passage of chariots and the armed war-elephants. These walls and moats must have been intended to protect the princes, priests, divinities

and their treasures quite as much as to increase the mystery that enveloped the ceremonial rites.

Nor must it be supposed that Angkor and its dependencies composed an isolated group in the land. Other ruins, almost equally admirable—such as Pnom-Chisor and its mediæval eagle's nest of a citadel; Prakhan and its eight kilometers of surrounding wall; Vat-Nokor and its pagoda, Koh-Ker and many other sanctuaries, today lost in the jungle, equally deserve the visit of the tourist and the inspection of the archæologist. But to reach them is difficult, almost impossible; for the time being we must give them up.

The only historic data we have that can tell us anything about the extent and frontiers of the ancient Khmer kingdom is an old Chinese inscription, going back to the year 650 of our era. It tells us that the country was bounded "on the north by mountains and valleys, on the south by a great lake and swamps that were often flooded. One could count as many as thirty cities there, dowered with magnificent buildings. Each city was peopled with many thousands of inhabitants."

One question suggests itself. What must have been the course followed by these Hindus as far as the basin of the Mékong?

If we are to believe M. Foucher, who gave his

views on this matter in a lecture before the *Comité de l'Asie Française,* in 1908, we should be correct in ascribing this ethnical Hinduization to priests of the rite of Sivâ who came from the basin of the Ganges in successive human waves which were blended, amalgamated, with the conquered populations, constituting at each influx a new ruling class, but of the same origin as the old, and grafting itself upon the former.

The regretted General de Beylié, in his work entitled *L'Architecture Hindoue en Extrême-Orient,* takes issue with this hypothesis. In his opinion—based on certain indications given by the Chinese annals and on an orographical study of Cambodia also—civilization was brought to the peoples of this part of Indo-China not by Sivaite missionaries but by adventurers, exiles or traders who came by *sea.* These immigrants must have come originally not only from the Dekkan and southern India, but even from the coast of Orissa and the valley of the Ganges, especially so far as concerns the coast of Burmah. Their point of departure may have been Madras, and they may have put in at different ports on the eastern coast of the peninsula of Malacca, with frequent changings of ships at the Isthmus of Kra, to end their

journey among the deltas of the Ménam and the Mékong.

As for us, without presuming to pass judgment, let us state emphatically that whether they came by land or by sea, the Hindu colonists brought with them a mature art, genially conceived and lavished on everything about them, as a delight to the eyes, as well as copings for their monuments, as elaborately and carefully decorated as a piece of jewelry, and even the three materials they employed, linonite, sandstone and wood.

But whence did they recruit the thousands of artisans necessary for the realization of their grandiose projects?

It is probable that for procuring, transporting and preparing the raw materials they had recourse to the conquered peoples who had been reduced to slavery and were requisitioned as workmen to cut out the blocks which Hindu artists, recruited from the conquering armies, then sculptured and finished. And here I must stop for a parenthesis, the double import of which, social and philosophical, will escape no one. Before Jesus Christ, all labor was forced labor, compulsory labor, slave labor. History and archæology have established irrefragably that the pyramids of Gizeh, the temples of Thebes, the Colosseum of Rome, the

sanctuaries and palaces of Anuradhapura, Borodoedoer and of Angkor were the work of an enslaved humanity. Then came Christianity, which loosened all chains. Centuries passed. . . . And presently the cathedrals, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, pure jewels set by hands that were free, whether voluntary or hired, flung heavenward their golden flèches, like rockets of liberation and hope.

But to return to the Khmer kingdom. For 800 years, during the course of which were raised the buildings we admire today, till 1250, the period of decadence and weakness, even until 1296, the date at which the Chinese traveler Tchéou-ta-Kouan declares that "during the recent wars with the Siamese the land has been completely devastated," dynasties succeeded one another there. If we accept this Chinese report we may suppose that the victorious Thaï armies crowned the humiliation of the conquered by destroying the proof of their genius and their power of old. But it is also possible that the slaves of the Hindu immigrants, after the overthrow of their conquerors in the thirteenth century, may have quite simply revolted and turned their fury against the sanctuaries of the divinities which had been unfavorable to

them, against the temples and palaces the construction of which had cost them so much hardship and caused so many deaths, in a climate so feverish and unwholesome as that of the Great Lake of Cambodia.

In any case, whether because of destruction from the outside or internal mutiny, it is probable that we are confronted by an act of vandalism. In fact, the archæologists assure us that the majority of the ruins could not have been caused by vegetable growth or by seismic disturbances, which are unknown in this region. Only the combined effort of several hundred men, united in a blind rage of destruction, could have caused such wrack and ruin as that, for example, of the towers and the galleries of Prakhan. We can pick out on the ground stones that are intact corresponding to other stones in perfect condition that have remained in their places; and we observe, also, massive parts of some building that is no longer anything but a heap of blocks while just beside it there still rises a light wall which the least effort might have overthrown.

Scientific deductions that proceed, unfortunately, from nothing but conjectures! In contrast to the Egyptians and the Greeks, the Khmer, if they built much, scarcely wrote at all. Are we

perhaps attributing to them here intentions they never possessed?

But my traveler's eyes, the eyes of one who has contemplated so many august ruins—Greece, Egypt, Timgad, Carthage, Golconda, Amber, Anuradhapura, the tombs of the Mings and those of Hué, the Hindu temples of Java, Boroboedoer and Prambanan—my traveler's, my *pilgrim's* eyes, as my master and friend Pierre Loti immortally said, my eyes refused to solve the riddle, they saw, they only wished to see the marvel.

And it is this marvel, this miracle that you should hasten to visit, for it is impossible that five or six years more should pass without *the most beautiful ruins in the world* being definitely classified, visited, swarmed over by the whole Anglo-Saxondom of two continents. Too many Baedekers will then reel off their anthems under the vaults of Angkor-Vat or the domes of Angkor-Tom. Who knows, even, whether the present comfortable bungalow, so in harmony with the spot, will not be replaced by some Angkor Palace Hotel with bedizened and obsequious lackeys? It is all wrong that the amazement, the emotion that simmers in you, that boils up and boils over should be diminished, lessened, destroyed by your surroundings. The poet, the artist, the thinker that

dreams in each of you would suffer too much from contact with these contingencies, these banalities. Go alone by yourself, therefore; commune with the radiant beauty of things, enjoy in solitude, as an egoist—oh, yes!—the unspeakable majesty of these places of prayer, where the faith that moves mountains once heaped up the most disconcerting and formidable pile of stones that have ever been cut, sculptured—I was about to say chased.

Ah! how triumphant it is, the arrival on elephant-back at Angkor-Tom, before the Ninevite glory of this Bayon, a veritable Tower of Babel with a human face, which the pick of the late M. Commaille, its learned and respectful curator, first shaved of its too thick hair of fig and banana trees! And how bewildered the spirit is in the presence of such a grandeur of plan and such exquisite skill in the execution of these bas-reliefs, which we owe to the chisels of obscure workmen whose name and race have remained unknown. These bas-reliefs—on which for hundreds and hundreds of yards the battles of the peoples on foot, on horseback, on elephant-back, in junks, unroll themselves—make me think of the celebrated motifs of Boroboedoer of which I have just spoken and to which they are often compared. But if it is true that Javanese statuary brings more delicacy and

perfection to its representation of the life of Buddha, I nevertheless dare to affirm here, without fear of any scientific denial, that the Khmer statuary is far more vigorous, imaginative and varied than its fortunate rival in Malaysia. It is a whole page of history in images, or rather in reliefs, that we live through again in the Khmer work. What discoveries are waiting for the patient archæologist who is willing to stick doggedly to this beautiful and noble task! . . .

Along with the epic episodes of the Vedas and the Ramayana, along with the churning of the "Ocean of Milk" and the struggle between human beings and monkeys, one finds in them savory and picturesque interpretations of the Hindu paradise and hell. The heavens are represented by a succession of thirty-seven aerial towers with three compartments each. Man in the state of blessedness, fat and jovial, occupies the central chamber: he has the features of a prince and is seated on a throne, surrounded by beautiful ladies who are fanning him and offering him fruits and flowers, or even holding out to him an oval mirror. Such —at least according to Brahma—are the conditions of perfect felicity. One might well consider them monotonous rather than delightful. And indeed, the conception of the Khmer hell seems more

subtle even in its puerility. Let us pass in review, therefore, some of the tortures of the condemned, whom the bas-reliefs represent with their human faces each one more skeleton-like than the others.

Here is the savory text:

Inscription 6.

"The damned who, having wealth, have nevertheless practised works of wickedness."

Punishment: "Condemned to be thrown upon thorny trees, skinned and scraped with a grater."

Inscription 8.

"Those who cheat or rob their neighbors."

Punishment: "Tortured alive by demons who tear out their tongue and drive stakes into their mouth."

Inscription 17.

"Those who steal strong liquors or approach the wives of scholars."

Punishment: "Torn by vultures and thrown into a lake of liquid, sticky pus."

Inscription 23.

"Those who take the wife of a friend."

Punishment: "Tortured in couples, tied fast, larded, flung into a frying pan and cooked."

(A punishment for adultery that strangely resembles the recipe for a good French country dish!)

Inscription 27.

"Those who steal parasols."

Punishment: "Thrown into burning braziers."

Inscription 30.

"Those who steal flowers from a garden."

Punishment: "Condemned to have the face torn by birds of prey, then to be later fastened to thorny trees and pierced by arrows."

(One could not more severely act the part of the knight-guardian of the rose on its stem.—Pierced by arrows for having picked flowers? What disloyal rivalry with cruel Cupid!)

* * * * * *

But with your permission let us leave this Bayon, where too many contradictions disconcert us. And, crossing the encircling walls of Angkor-Tom, let us plunge for a few moments into the jungle. There await us the most extraordinary surprises of nature struggling with human labor and art.

There is Ta-Prom, there are Ta-Ménam and Ta-Kéo, there is Prakhan, all those old sanctuaries

covered with moss and forsaken under the crumbling ruins on which one puts a trembling foot—the anguish of sacrilege or the fear of a catastrophe, who knows?—fallen pillars over which one has to climb like a goat, crumbling galleries where one slips along like a rat. And what surprising discoveries during this aerial and subterranean exploration, in the half-light of a City of the Sleeping Wood, which one would swear had been drawn by a Gustave Doré!

But now the purple or salmon-colored hour of sunset leads us back to that unequaled marvel, the unique and prodigious Angkor-Vat. . . .

It rises up, the Temple, in the deep sadness of a dying sunset. A flush of rose-gold, then of red, falls full on its five massive towers where the bats, its only present inhabitants, are already in flight, wheeling and clamoring.

It is the sacred hour, the moving hour for one to scale all those fairylike terraces and after them the monumental, the almost perpendicular stairway that leads to the Holy of Holies, the Tabernacle. There smile eternally, with their same ironic and kindly smile, the Buddhas of all sizes that were accumulated by the piety of the faithful; there the divine Apsaras, their breasts erect, their hands gracefully turned palm upwards, still dance,

supple and wanton, naked virgins haunted by nothing evil; there also, on the lower levels, grin the evil and shadowy Asouras. An old bonze in a yellow robe moves to and fro on the highest terraces of the building, his eye anxious and scrutinizing. He comes toward you, excuses himself, mumbles a smile between his black teeth, then lights, one by one, the lamps of the sanctuary. The Faith of the vanished giants who built this mirage-like acropolis must not be extinguished, must not die.

Your head slightly bowed, you descend the temple steps. The humble and touching appeal of the yellow man has stirred you, the last echo of a magnificent epopee that has grown dim in this corner of decaying stones and under these somber vaults.

Angkor-Vat has fallen asleep under the caress of the twilight, as the nymph Viraja, in the Sanskrit legend, fell asleep under the kiss of Krishna the Seducer.

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